

LUKE BRYAN GOES HEAD TO HEAD WITH JASON ALDEAN

NASH NEXT SPOTLIGHT ARTIST BIG SMO

KEITH URBAN AMPS UP FOR KIDS

NASH

COUNTRY FOR LIFE | JULY 20, 2015

Country Weekly

NEW LOOK!

THE LEADING LADIES OF COUNTRY

HAVE A DRINK WITH KACEY MUSGRAVES

Faith Hill

Carrie Underwood

Kelsea Ballerini

15 WOMEN WHO ROCKED THE JUKEBOX!

+

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REVEALS
5 THINGS
THAT TAKE
HIS TIME

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A Legend Passes

Forty years ago, one of country music's original stylists and influential entertainers, **LEFTY FRIZZELL**, died from complications of a stroke on July 19, 1975, at age 47. A contemporary of Hank Williams—in fact, the two stars toured together in the early 1950s—Lefty was an early proponent of honky-tonk music, which referenced adult subject matter like drinking and carousing and was designed to be played in bars and nightclubs. Lefty wrote or co-wrote most of his own material, including his No. 1 hits “If You’ve Got the Money I’ve Got the Time” and “Always Late (With Your Kisses),” the latter covered by Dwight Yoakam in 1987. It has been often written that Lefty had rock-star appeal, blessed with curly hair and a natural smile and favoring colorful stage wear designed by the legendary tailor Nudie Cohen. Lefty influenced a number of future stars, notably Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson—who paid tribute to him on his 1977 album *To Lefty From Willie*—Dwight Yoakam and Keith Whitley. “The impact Lefty had on country music is not even measurable,” Merle said in a biography of Lefty written by his younger brother David Frizzell. “No one could handle a song like Lefty.”

2015

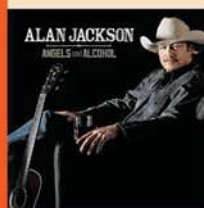
JULY 17: HIS KIND OF DAY

Wish **LUKE BRYAN**, born on July 17, 1976, a happy birthday as he gets closer to saying farewell to his thirties. And be sure to check out Luke's exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville if you haven't visited it yet.



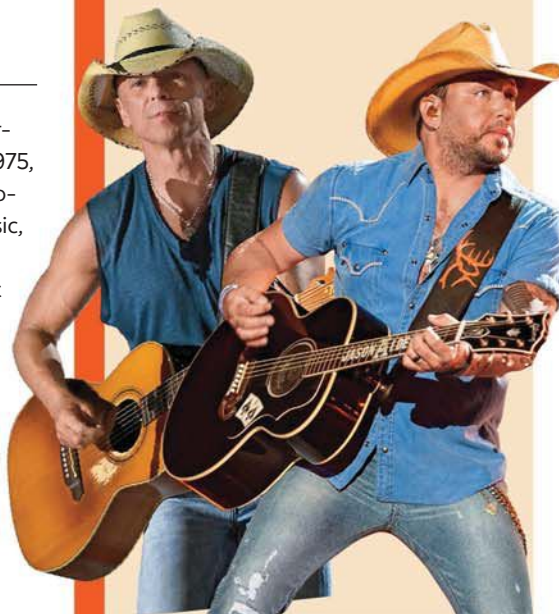
JULY 17: ALAN'S ALBUM

The long-awaited new album by **ALAN JACKSON**, *Angels and Alcohol*, is set for release on July 17. It's Alan's first studio album of all-new material in three years.



JULY 18-19: DYNAMITE DUO

Get ready for a musical heat wave as **KENNY CHESNEY** and **JASON ALDEAN** bring their tours together for two nights at Target Field in Minneapolis.



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July 20, 2015

40 On the Cover

Our list of female country stars, including **MIRANDA LAMBERT**, **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** and others who have contributed mightily to country music since the turn of the new century.



Miranda & Carrie by Frederick Breiden/Getty Images; Kix & Terry by David Long/Cooling Channel; Big Smo courtesy WMG Nashville
On Cover: Kelsea by Kevin Johnson/Corbis; Faith by Jason Merritt/Getty Images; Carrie by Celebrity Monitor/Corbis

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Who runs the world? Girls! . . . to quote Beyoncé. Some of you may or may not be aware of the buzz about women in country music. A short while ago, radio consultant Keith Hill set off a firestorm by stating that if you want to get ratings on radio, don't play women, and women don't want to listen to women on the radio. Well, that did *not* go over well. And he went on, calling women the tomatoes in the salad that is country music. How-

ever, in the past week women have really been proving him wrong. From Kelsea Ballerini's "Love You Like You Mean It" going to No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart to Sunny Sweeney hitting the top spot on the Texas music charts. And, of course, there is Taylor Swift. (Yes, I know she's not country anymore, no letters please, but she began in country and will always have a place.) She just, well . . . runs the world. With the ladies in the forefront, hopefully for a long time to come, we wanted to take a look at 15 women of country who have had a No. 1 hit in the past 15 years. If you ask me, that's not that many. We were hard-pressed to find ladies who hit the top of the charts since 2000. But if you check out our cover story, you will read about those who have and those who have had an impact on country and continue to do so. I hope to do a similar cover story down the road where we don't have enough room to include all the great women of country going No. 1.

And on a side note: Being a woman myself, I absolutely prefer to hear females on the radio. Ya know why? Because I can actually relate to what they are singing! What? I know it's crazy. I'm actually kind of tired of men telling us ladies what women want. We'll let you know what we like. Just ask. Stand up and be heard, ladies. This one's for the girls.

Don't miss the next issue, on stands July 20, when we sit down with Alan Jackson to talk about his 25 years of music and 35 years of marriage.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER



Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

CHARTING IT OUT

Been reading your magazine for years. One of my favorite sections is the charts—the top albums and the top singles. Those lists went from 40 to 25 (didn't mind that too much), but now they appear to be only 10

because you've added three new lists which I don't care about. If you must have these "new" lists, please add a second page and leave the Top 25 albums and singles alone.



LOU GLOSSIP,
Harrah, Okla.

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Thank you for your letter, Lou. You are not the only one we heard from on this. We have expanded the charts to Top 20 and are working to get it back to 25 soon. Thank you for writing—we hear you!

HIDDEN FOR GOOD?

Are you going to have the country "Find the Hidden Names/Songs/etc. Puzzle" again? That was one of my main reasons for buying your magazines. I was extremely disappointed to not see it in your new issue.



ELIZABETH BART
Oakdale, Minn.

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Fear not, Elizabeth, we will be bringing those puzzles back in future issues. Stay tuned. Thanks for reading.

TWITTER

@ThePeachPickers Love this article in @countryweekly. So thankful I got to be there. Amazing! #GeorgiaOnMyMind



MARLA KECK
@MarlaKeck

@countryweekly 3Things 1. Love your honest music reviews 2. Miss On the Edge column 3. When will you review @TerriClarkMusic new killer single?



MARK CLARK
@MarkClarkster

I'll be getting a copy! Y'all check out @countryweekly with @eastoncorbin in it. So many exciting things! Proud.



TEXAS SWEETIE
@sweetxgirl

FACEBOOK

Bring this redneck woman back to country music. She is missed. Happy birthday, Gretchen [Wilson]!



NATALIE PIERETTI

Love that he [Darius Rucker] is giving homes to some veterans. Thank you, sir, for your kindness and being thoughtful.



SUSIE COLE

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**NASH Country
Weekly**

COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FIRST TAKE

PAINT IT, BRAD

Brad Paisley, who served as The Rolling Stones' opener for their June 17 show at Nashville's LP Field, sits in with (from left) Mick, Charlie, Ronnie and Keith on "Dead Flowers."

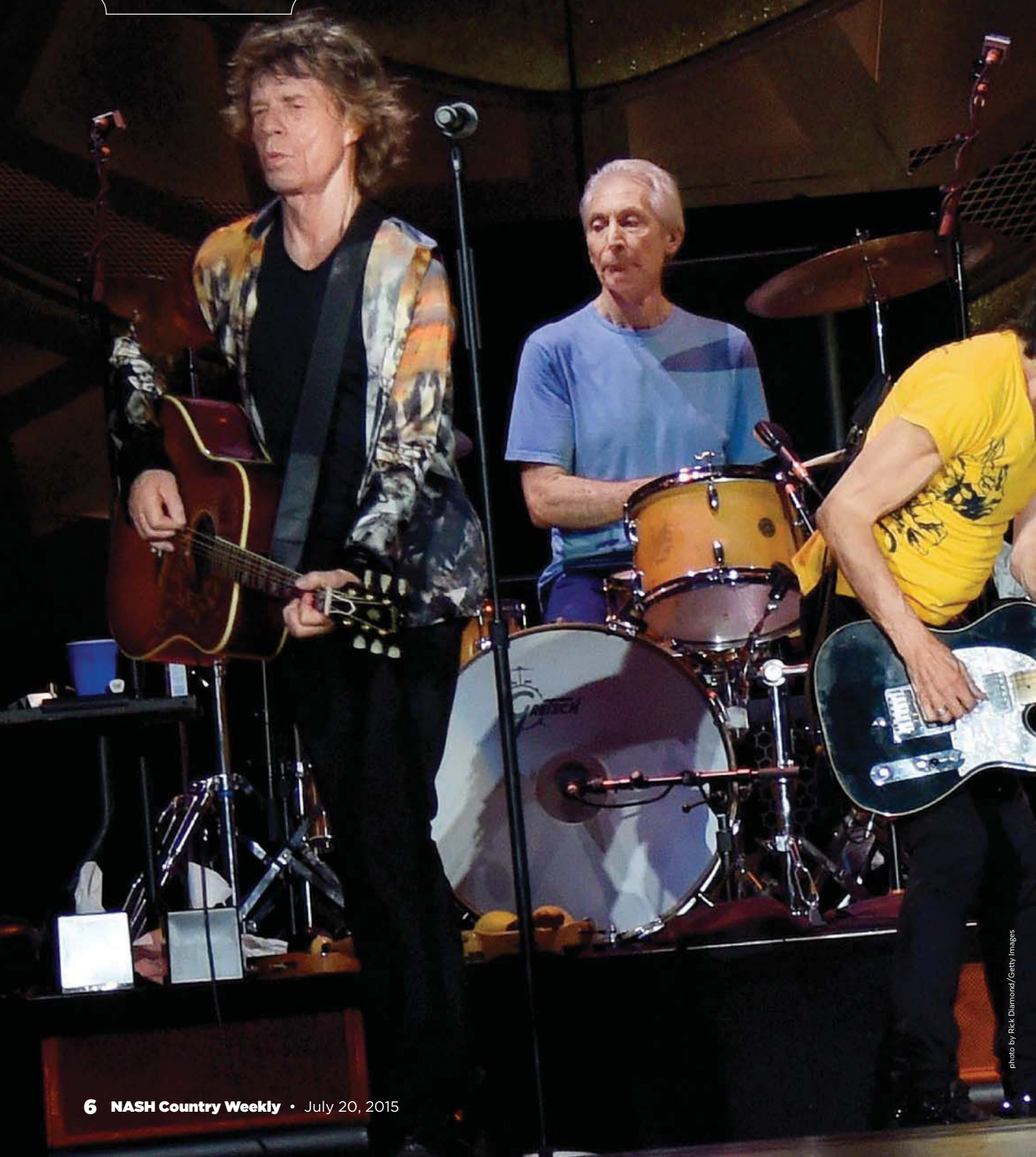


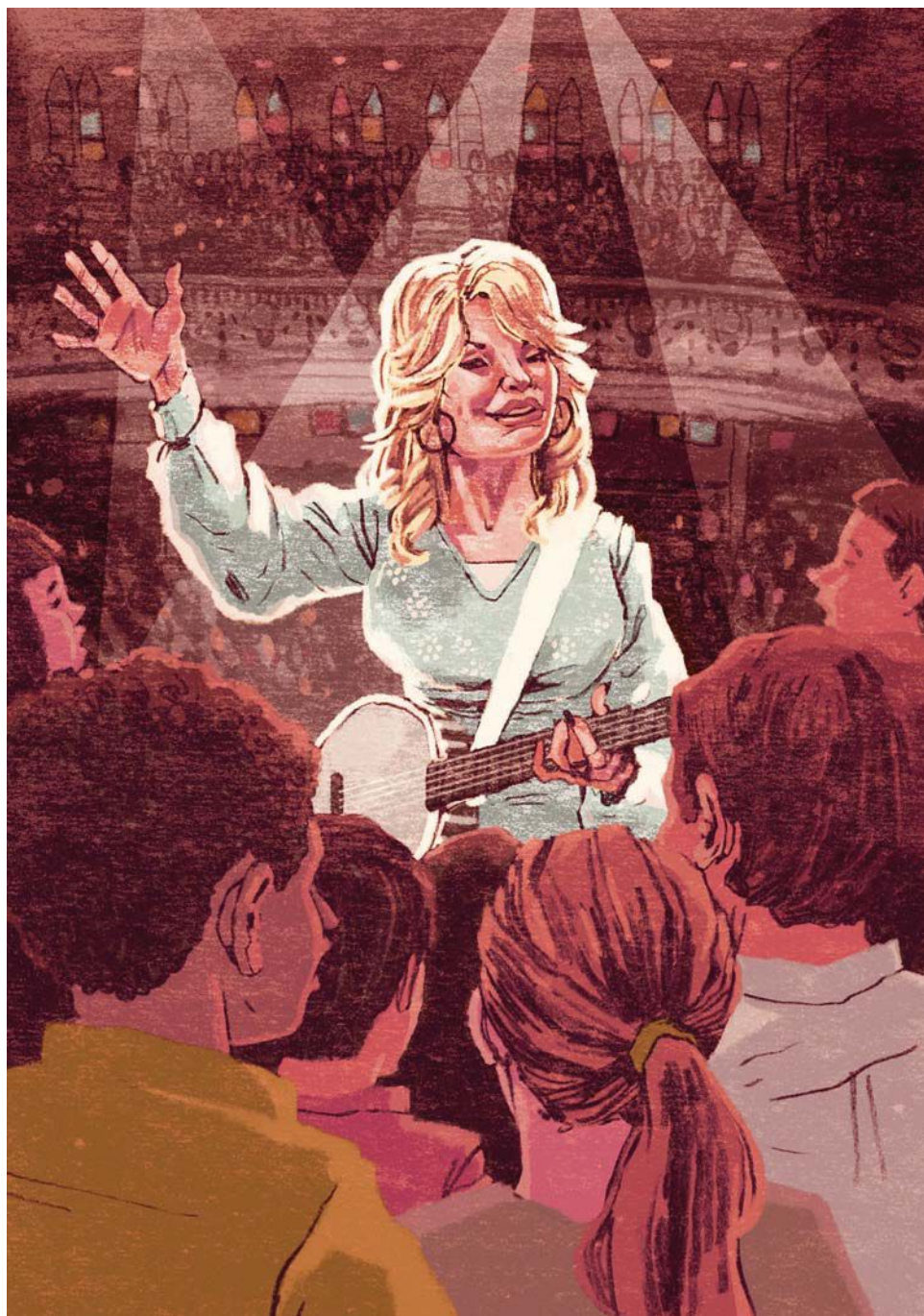
photo by Rick Diamond/Getty Images



THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act



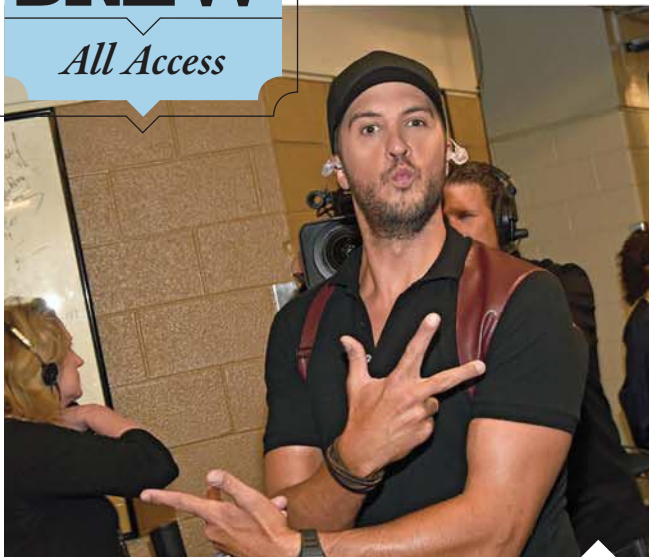
PURE DOLLY

When **DOLLY PARTON** schedules a concert date in Nashville, it's a citywide event. Dolly proved that as her July 31 show at the Ryman Auditorium, *Dolly Parton: Pure and Simple*, sold out in nearly record time and a second show was immediately booked for Aug. 1. The initial performance will be the first show Dolly has headlined in Nashville in 12 years, and it supports the W.O. Smith School of Music in Nashville, which offers music lessons to children in low-income areas. The second show will benefit the Opry Trust Fund, which offers financial assistance to Grand Ole Opry members in times of need.

Illustration by Drew Bardana

THE COUNTRY BREW

All Access



(Above) **NOT-SO-THUG LIFE** Luke Bryan appears to be ready to wobble, baby, at the 2015 CMT Music Awards at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville on June 10; (below) **GIRLS ON THE SIDE** One of Nashville's favorites, critically acclaimed Chris Stapleton, knows pretty when he sees it. He's next to his wife, Morgane, and Lee Ann Womack.



TURN DOWN FOR WATT The Houston Texans' JJ Watt tackles Little Big Town's Phillip Sweet (left) and Jimi Westbrook.

photos by Rick Diamond/Getty Images

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Johnny Lee



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Marty Raybon



**T. Graham
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Jamie O'Neal



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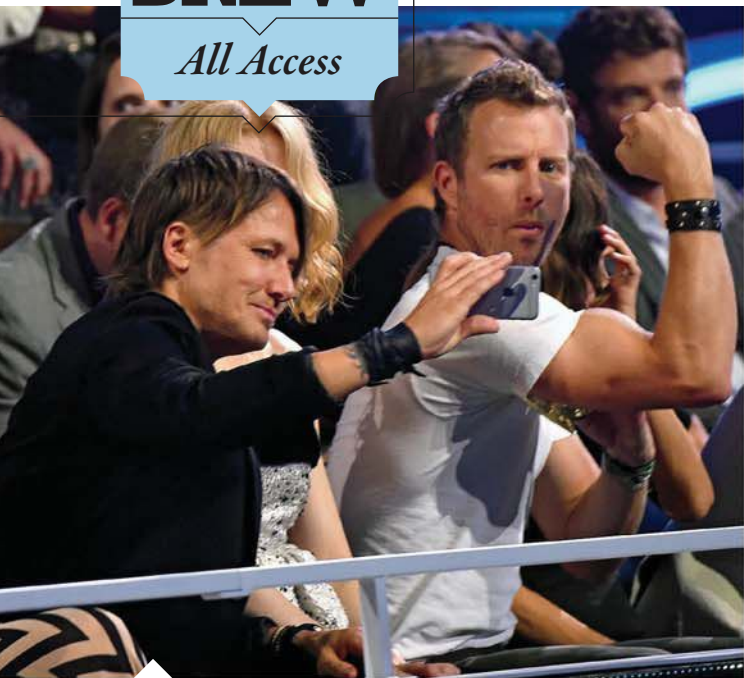
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Artists subject to change



(Above) **STRONG ARM** Dierks Bentley shows Keith Urban his faux-sique at the CMT Music Awards; (below) **TWINSIES** Toby Keith (left) and Stephen Colbert catch up at the Songwriters Hall of Fame Awards in New York on June 18.



BIG & LITTLE Big & Rich's Big Kenny Alphin meets Triple Crown-winning jockey Victor Espinoza.



SOMEBODY CALL 911! A coiffure emergency was calmly controlled when Taylor Swift came to the rescue of Kelsea Ballerini backstage at Tay-Tay's show in Pittsburgh.

Keith & Dierks and Toby & Stephen by Larry Busacca/Getty Images; Kenny & Victor by Rick Diamond/Getty Images; Kelsea & Taylor courtesy Kelsea Ballerini Instagram

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(Above) **MINE'S BIGGER** Charlie Worsham and Danielle Bradbery compare ink before their show on the BMI stage at CMA Music Festival; (below) **SOMEBODY SAY "HOL-LA"** Ray Benson (left) and Lyle Lovett reach for the high notes at the Austin City Limits Hall of Fame inductions.



FROG FINGERS David Nail gives a shout-out to his TCU baseball fans on his Instagram page.



(Left) **THE EYES HAVE IT** Gloria Estefan (left) and Martina McBride perform “In My Daughter’s Eyes” at the Power of Love Gala benefit in Las Vegas; (above right) **WHO DID IT?** Raelynn (second from left) hangs with (from left) Sarah Gilman, Piper Curda and Olivia Holt from Disney’s *I Didn’t Do It*; (below) **THE BEST PART OF WAKING UP** is kisses for Joey + Rory’s Joey Martin from baby Indiana.



IT’S A GIRL for Jana Kramer, a furbaby named Biscuit.



Charlie & Danielle courtesy Danielle Bradbery Twitter; Gloria & Martina by Ethan Miller/Getty Images; Sarah, Raelynn, Piper & Olivia by Eric McCandless/Diener Channel; Ray & Lyle by Scott Newton/Austin City Limits; David courtesy David Nail Instagram; Joey & Indiana courtesy Joey+Rory Instagram; Jana courtesy Jana Kramer Instagram



WOMEN OF THE YEAR

This one's for the girls, y'all! The weekly songwriting showcase for women in country music, Song Suffragettes, celebrated its first anniversary with a sold-out show at their club home, The Listening Room. Hot newcomers **NATALIE STOVALL** and **RUTHIE COLLINS** were special guests for the evening's festivities, which included three separate writers' rounds. Song Suffragettes also took part in CMA Music Festival this year with two different shows on the CMA Close Up stage. One performance featured **DEANA CARTER**, while the other showcased **JAMIE O'NEAL**.



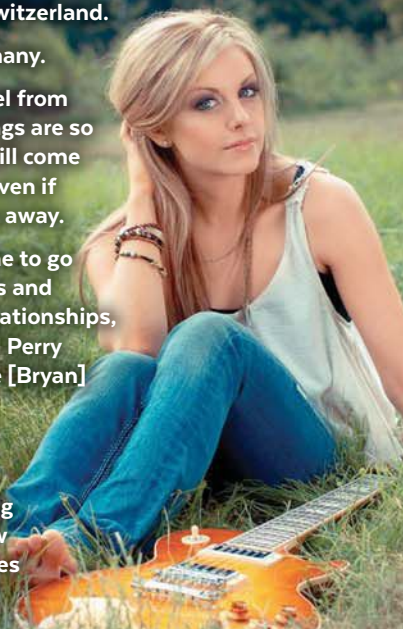
DIXIELAND DELIGHT

THE DIXIE CHICKS recently announced they are embarking on a six-show European tour in 2016. The trio will start their venture in Amsterdam on April 20, before heading to the UK and Ireland to play arenas in Birmingham (April 29), Manchester (April 30), London (May 1), Glasgow (May 3) and Dublin (May 4). The London date at the O2 arena is near the location where lead singer Natalie Maines made her infamous 2003 declaration in protest of then-President George W. Bush, so President Obama needs to be on his best behavior until then.

EURO TRIPPIN'

LINDSAY ELL's
five favorite things
about touring in Europe:

5. The chocolate in Switzerland.
4. The coffee in Germany.
3. It's so easy to travel from place to place. Things are so close and people will come to several shows, even if they're a few hours away.
2. It's really fun for me to go over with other acts and bond and foster relationships, first with The Band Perry and then with Luke [Bryan] and FGL.
1. The fans. They are incredible. Their passion for listening to and learning new country music leaves me speechless.





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(From left) Shane McAnally, Trevor Rosen, Matthew Ramsey and Dierks Bentley

SAY YOU WANNA PARTY

DIERKS BENTLEY | "SAY YOU DO" NO. 1 PARTY | ASCAP, JUNE 15

CMA Fest may have wrapped but the party continued at ASCAP on June 15 as friends, family and industry executives gathered to celebrate the No. 1 success of "Say You Do," Dierks Bentley's 13th chart-topping hit and the first one he didn't have a hand in writing.

"As a songwriter who is also a singer, you have a great respect for a hit song," Dierks said. "I felt so honored when 'Say You Do' was pitched to me as a potential song for this record. These guys are such great songwriters. I'm really thankful we found it and that they trusted me with this song."

Written by Old Dominion band mates Matthew Ramsey and Trevor Rosen and hit songwriter Shane McAnally, "Say You Do" marks Matt's first No. 1 as a songwriter, Trevor's second and Shane's 11th.

"My granddad, who I wish was here, once told me that no one will work harder at this than you—except your wife," Matt said. Turning to his wife after becoming emotional and taking a minute to regain this composure, he mustered a heartfelt "Thank you."

The songwriters and friends reminisced about writing together long before they had any hits.

"I remember writing songs at Matt's house when his youngest daughter [who is now 6] was just a baby," Shane said. "She would sit on the floor and just hang out while we wrote."

After thanking their family, friends and band mates, they turned to Dierks.

"Dierks is a fantastic songwriter who easily could have written this whole album himself," Trevor said. "It means a lot to the songwriters in this town that you cut other people's songs. Thank you for giving this song a chance."

For Dierks, who kicked off his Sounds of Summer Tour with Kip Moore, Maddie & Tae and Canaan Smith in June, performing "Say You Do" on the road has been extra special.

"When you hold the microphone out there and people sing every word, it's just an unbelievable feeling," Dierks said. "'Say You Do' is just a good country song that will stand the test of time."

ASHLEY EICHER

NIFI FEST GOES ECLECTIC

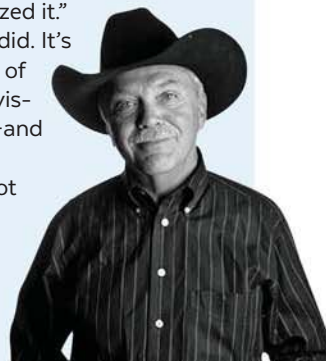
Have you ever been to a summertime country music festival and thought, "Man, there's just too much country music here. I really want some alternative rock"? For the three or four of you who responded in the affirmative, there's



the NiFi Festival, taking place Aug. 28-30 at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta, Ky. In addition to the heavy-duty country lineup of **MIRANDA LAMBERT, BRANTLEY GILBERT, JAKE OWEN, HANK WILLIAMS JR.** and others, guests will also have a chance to check out **Green Day, Kings of Leon, Weezer, Spoon** and many other rock and indie-friendly artists. Single-day passes are available at nififest.com for \$99.

Billy Bob's Bids Bye-Bye to an Icon

If you've ever enjoyed the great entertainment at Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth, you can tip your hat to **ROBERT GALLAGHER**. Robert has worked with Billy Bob's since the beginning, when he booked bands for the nightclub before coming on as the entertainment director in 1988. Now, 27 years later, the beloved ambassador for that great Fort Worth landmark is stepping down. "It's just time," he tells *Nash Country Weekly*. "I've got four kids and three grandkids that I want to spend time with." Billy Bob's will throw Robert a going-away/birthday party in August, and you can bet there will be plenty of Three-Legged Monkeys consumed. "It's the house drink," Robert notes. "I didn't invent it, I just popularized it." He certainly did. It's almost a rite of passage for visiting artists—and journalists—to have a shot with Robert.





TURNING HEADS

As a Father's Day surprise, the Lusk family teamed up with Made Man, the *Today* show's **AL ROKER** and country star **JOSH TURNER** to make their father's dream come true. Family patriarch Lewis Lusk was surprised with the gift of a lifetime, a professional recording session at Memphis' famed Sun Studio, where Josh collaborated with Lewis on his original song "Sally & Jack." But that's not the only recent surprise Josh has been a part of. A couple of days later, the "All Over Me" singer was struck with a baseball that left him with a broken nose and concussion. Not to worry, though, Josh took to Facebook the next day to let everyone know he was OK.



THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Beyond being a unique fan-driven experience, CMA Music Festival also has turned into a major fundraiser for music education initiatives like Keep the Music Playing. During the 2015 festival, the Country Music Association and the CMA Foundation launched the new Music Education Matters campaign, with **KEITH URBAN** as the program's first national ambassador. For his part, Keith contributed 60 self-branded guitars with amplifiers, strings and picks to Music Education Matters partner programs in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, Nashville and San Francisco. "Music is not only powerful, it's magical," said Keith in a release. "It has the ability to bring people together, to inspire, calm, enhance creativity and intelligence, and to improve concentration. There is nothing like seeing the genesis of the relationship between an instrument and a child or young adult. I'm so honored and proud that the CMA Foundation has given us this opportunity to be a part of something that can have such a positive effect on so many young lives."

Representatives for Music Education Matters also visited **CHARLIE WORSHAM**'s fan club party during CMA Music Festival, presenting a \$10,000 grant to the Quest Center for Art & Community Development. The Dickson, Tenn.-based organization provides music education to a rural community with limited access. With the grant at Charlie's party, the CMA's total contributions to music education on a local and national scale totals more than \$11 million since 2006.

CROSS COUNTRY

PARMALEE EDITION

		WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING FOR THE FIRST TIME?	WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD TV SHOW?	IF MONEY WERE NO OBJECT, WHERE WOULD YOU GO ON VACATION?	WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BREAKFAST FOOD?
MATT THOMAS		For the past eight years [my Jeep] needed to be overhauled. Three days ago, I [sent] it to the guy to start working on it.	<i>MTV Unplugged.</i>	Bora Bora, somewhere that there's a cabana on blue water and a tiki bar.	Bacon.
SCOTT THOMAS		I had my first conscious helicopter ride this year.	<i>He-Man.</i>	We haven't been to Europe yet, but you can't beat a beach.	Bacon, eggs and grits.
BARRY KNOX		This year, we flew in a C2 Cod airplane and landed onto an aircraft carrier. We went to play for the Navy troops.	<i>Saved by the Bell.</i>	Hawaii.	Bacon.
JOSH McSWAIN		About a month ago, I jumped off the top of the Stratosphere in Las Vegas, 108 stories.	<i>Dukes of Hazzard.</i>	Hawaii.	Cold pizza.

Flower Shower

Lynn Anderson may have never promised you a rose garden, but this year country artists are offering a bouquet of blossoms on the red carpet . . . proving they are florally fearless. We found a plethora of posy prints online suitable for work and play.



RED CARPET ROSES

Mickey Guyton (left)
and songwriter
Nicolle Galyon

FULL BLOOM

(From top)
Cam,
Laura Bell Bundy and
Meghan Linsey

"SHAVING WITH SOAP AND WATER
WON'T GET YOUR LEGS
THIS SOFT AND SMOOTH!"

- Jana Kramer



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FOLLOW YOUR SPIRIT

Zodiac Vodka creates a cocktail inspired by the company's brand ambassador, **KACEY MUSGRAVES**.

Zodiac Vodka, produced in potato-rich Idaho, is making a big splash as the company starts the first phase of its national distribution rollout. In mid-June, the company celebrated its Tennessee launch with the Bartender Cocktail Challenge at Nashville hot spot Acme Feed & Seed.

The Challenge was judged by Zodiac's brand ambassador, Kacey Musgraves, who also helped design the bold new look of Zodiac's bottle. "When I first tried the vodka, I loved it and knew I wanted to be a part of it," Kacey told the assembled crowd.

Here's a drink inspired by Texas-born Kacey and made with Zodiac Vodka that you can stir up right at home. It's called, fittingly enough, Texas Golden Girl.

BOB PAXMAN



Texas Golden Girl

- 2 ounces Zodiac Original Vodka
- 1 ounce honey syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce lemon juice
- 1½ ounces pineapple juice
- 1 dash Angostura Bitters
- 1 lemon wheel
- 1 pineapple wedge

For honey syrup:

4 parts honey to 1 part hot water.
STIR to incorporate.

Put first five ingredients into a cocktail shaker, **SHAKE** and strain into a tall Collins glass.

ADD ice and garnish with lemon wheel and pineapple wedge.

Enjoy responsibly.

The Ultimate Thomas Kinkade Christmas Scene!

WORLD PREMIERE OF AN ALL-NEW COMPOSITION MEASURING 40 INCHES WIDE!

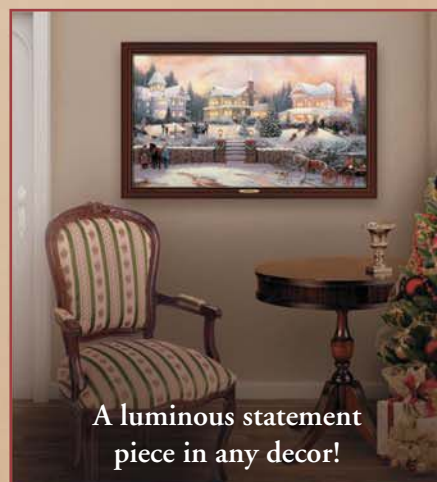


Step back in time to join the celebration

When Thomas Kinkade was first discovering the artistic vision that would define his remarkable career, he painted a suite of four holiday scenes that would become some of his most highly-sought pieces. His visions of a Victorian Christmas truly capture what the holidays are all about—family, friends and loved ones joining together in celebration, sharing in the light of love. Today, these timeless scenes continue to inspire the joy of the season in all who view them. And now, for the first time anywhere, they have been brought together as never before, creating a single, seamless image of a grand holiday celebration alive with the light and love of Christmas. The largest framed canvas print ever offered by the Bradford Exchange, this framed Masterpiece Edition has all the impact of an original painting in a fine art gallery—to be enjoyed in your home.

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Shown much smaller than actual size of 40 inches wide x 24 inches tall. Hanging device included for easy, secure display. Requires 3 "AA" batteries, not included.

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Singles

Keith Urban

"John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16"

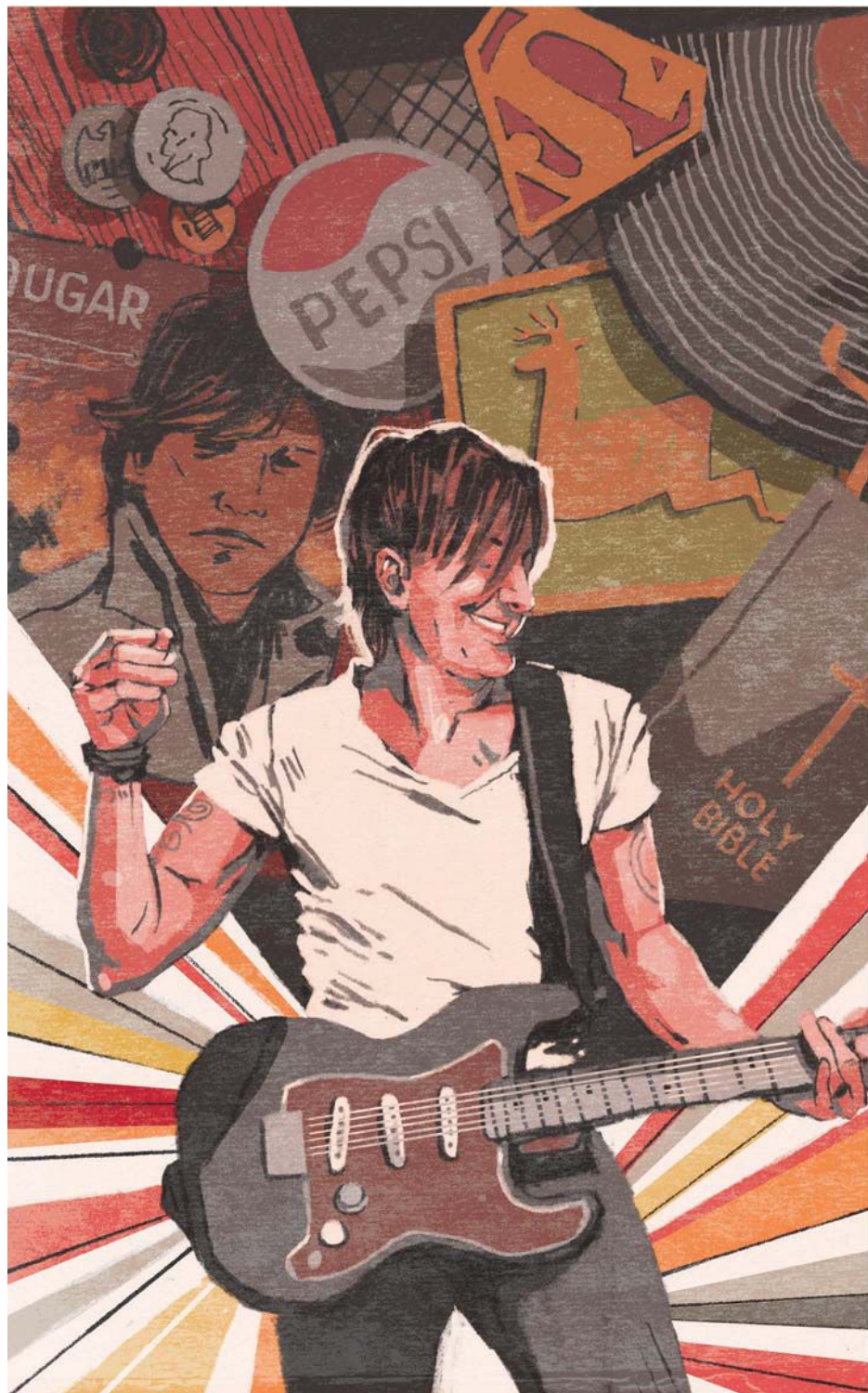
HIT RED RECORDS/CAPITOL RECORDS

A-

I'll take "American Icons" for \$800, Alex. Come on, play with us! Grab a pen and start making a list of cultural icons, that's what songwriters Shane McAnally, Ross Copperman and Josh Osborne did with the new Keith Urban single, "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16." But they found a way to finesse clever references to Marilyn Monroe, "American Pie," Ernest Hemingway and TV dinners into one of the catchiest, most infectious songs of the summer, with a toe-tapping rhythm and a funky groove that pops like picnic firecrackers.

Conscientious production by Keith and Dann Huff lets the song's arrangement ebb and flow as subtle background choruses and instruments, crowd noise and Keith's own vocal tics are subtly added and subtracted. It's an invitation to listen over and over again to catch something new every time.

But while you're listening for that second, third, fourth time, you start to realize that the tune isn't just a laundry list of all things



Americana, there is some depth and a message. The bridge, *I spent a lot of years running from believing, looking for another way to save my soul / The longer I live, the more I see it / There's only one way home*, set to only a simple church organ, reflects the most elemental defini-

tion of John 3:16—believe.

FINAL JEOPARDY: He is a master at combining contemporary and, heck, even fun production and arrangements with spot-on country sensibilities. Who is Keith Urban?
TAMMY RAGUSA

Billy Currington

"Drinking Town With a Football Problem"

MERCURY NASHVILLE

B



In spite of its terrible title, Billy's latest single works on a couple of levels. At its most basic, the rock-tinged

tune showcases Billy's preternatural skill for finding the hookiest songs in existence, and he turns in a routinely solid vocal performance. On a deeper level, peering through the haze of nostalgia, it's a song about inclusion: people of different stripes and socio-economic backgrounds all find some common ground in combined activities of drinking and football. It sounds so nice, it's hard not to wish the world actually worked that way.

JON FREEMAN

Cam

"Burning House"

ARISTA NASHVILLE

A



Country newcomer Cam scorches on her new single, "Burning House," a ballad fraught with raw emo-

tion about trying to hold on to the pieces of a broken relationship. With the simple accompaniment of piano and strings, the song relies on Cam's smoldering vocals instead of overproduction, much the same way Little Big Town's "Girl Crush" drives its point home. While "Burning House" probably won't get the country radio support it deserves during the anthem-heavy summer months, the tune exposes Cam for what she is—a damn fine talent.

JIM CASEY

Videos

Tyler Farr

"Withdrawals"

COLUMBIA NASHVILLE

A



From what we know of Tyler Farr, he's a good ol' boy—charming, sweet, funny, humble and one of the finest vocalists in country music today. He's also fearless when it comes to his art. In the video for his newest single, "Withdrawals," he proves that as he convincingly displays the deepest emotions of heartbreak, literally drowning in pain, anguish, disbelief and even hysteria, and closed off from anyone who could throw him a life preserver. Visually stunning and emotionally draining, the video is impeccably done. **T.R.**

Jason Aldean

"Tonight Looks Good on You"

BROKEN BOW RECORDS

B-



Jason Aldean's latest video derives its tension from a problem that ended with the invention of the cell-phone. The blue-collar protagonist has plans for his lovely lady, but his boss demands overtime. She's all dolled up, impatiently waiting while he's stuck at work. A begoggled and coveralled Jason, working nearby, has noticed this injustice and offers to cover for his coworker. It all works out in the end (what a relief!), but a quick text message could have saved them a lot of worry. **J.F.**

Thompson Square

"Trans Am"

STONEY CREEK RECORDS

B



Face it, you can't really waver from the song's central idea, which boils down to living it up while riding around in the titular vehicle. The clip concentrates on the visuals and thankfully avoids playing off the car-girl double-entendre suggested in the lyrics. There's plenty of glitter and some special effects, with nice cuts to the beat of the rhythm. The magnified flash of the word "Hey" as the chorus rolls around seems unnecessary. "Trans Am" isn't much on originality but high on functionality, doing what it needs to do, which is showcase the song and the duo. **BOB PAXMAN**

5

THINGS THAT TAKE MY TIME SAM HUNT

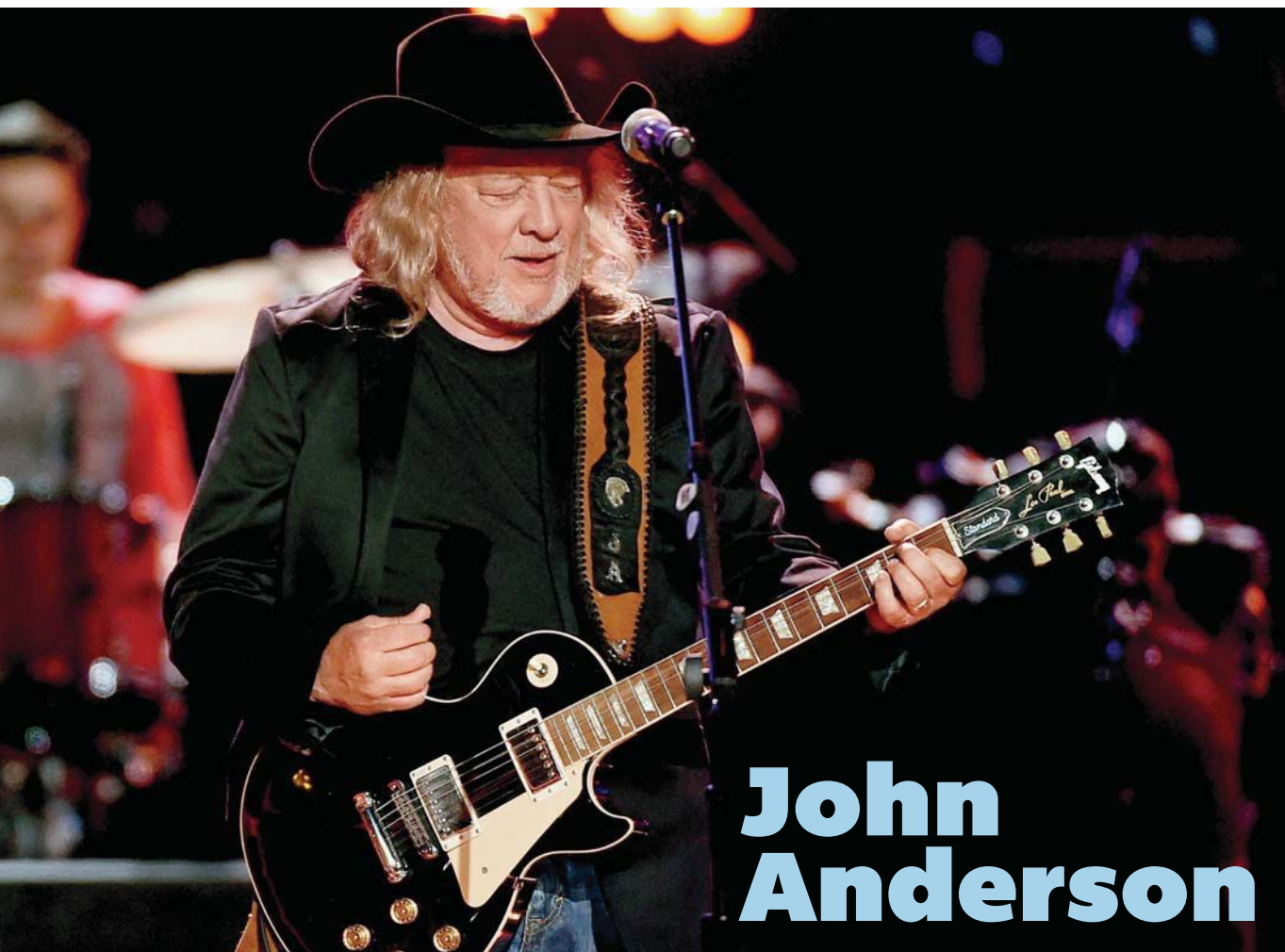
1 Riding on the bus is something that takes up a good bit of my time. Fortunately most of the time I'm sleeping on those trips, and then waking up and being in the next city. Back when we were in the van, we had to sleep at night and drive during the day, so I was awake during all the traveling. It was a little tougher back then.

2 We will try to find something cool about the city that we're in and do something entertaining, whether it be a go-cart track, Putt-Putt or finding a basketball court somewhere to go play.

3 I do a lot of eating, so that takes up a lot of my time . . . just eating in general [*laughs*].

4 We'll do a sound check every day. We'll get up there and jam and play music.

5 I try to get some kind of exercise in every day, which most of the time is just running around the venue for a minute.



John Anderson

JULY 18

Tuscumbia, Ala.
Gardiner Farms

JULY 24

Wichita, Kan.
54 West Music Hall

JULY 25

Cheyenne, Wyo.
Cheyenne Frontier Days

AUG. 1

Victoria, Texas
Jaycee Hall

AUG. 7

Louisville, Ky.
Freedom Hall

AUG. 8

Mount Vernon, Ky.
Renfro Valley
Entertainment Center

AUG. 19

Opaskwayak, Manitoba
50th Annual Community Celebration

AUG. 21

Saint Michael, N.D.
Spirit Lake Casino & Resort

SEPT. 5

Memphis, Tenn.
Delta Fair & Music Festival

SEPT. 12

Dyersburg, Tenn.
Dyer County Fair

SEPT. 17

Dade City, Fla.
3rd Annual John Anderson
Benefit Concert

SEPT. 18

Bristol, Tenn.
Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion

SEPT. 19

Morehead, Ky.
Poppy Mountain
Bluegrass Festival

SEPT. 25

Trinidad, Calif.
Cher-Ae Heights Casino

SEPT. 26

Bakersfield, Calif.
Kern County Fair

SEPT. 27

Folsom, Calif.
Harris Center for the Arts

SEPT. 30

Yakima, Wash.
State Fair Park

DEC. 6

Knoxville, Tenn.
Knoxville Coliseum

STAR2STAR

It's well known that Luke Bryan and Jason Aldean are good friends who co-own a company, but what do they really have in common? Let's see how these two Georgia boys match up.



LUKE BRYAN



REAL NAME:

Thomas Luther Bryan

AGE:

39

BORN:

Leesburg, Ga.

INSTRUMENTS:

Guitar and piano

BEFORE HE WAS FAMOUS:

Luke helped his dad with the family's peanut and fertilizer business.

TATTOO:

Buck Commander Logo on right shoulder (and wife's initials on butt)

SPARE TIME:

Luke loves hunting and fishing.

FAVORITE COLLEGE FOOTBALL TEAM:

Georgia Bulldogs

MARITAL STATUS:

Married—Caroline Bryan

KIDS:

Three boys—Bo, Tatum and nephew Til

MUSICAL INFLUENCES:

Alabama, Dwight Yoakam, John Anderson

HOT COLLAB:

"The Only Way I Know" with Jason Aldean and Eric Church

JASON ALDEAN



REAL NAME:

Jason Aldine Williams

AGE:

38

BORN:

Macon, Ga.

INSTRUMENT:

Guitar

BEFORE HE WAS FAMOUS:

Jason drove a delivery truck for Pepsi.

TATTOO:

Buck Commander logo on right shoulder (and cross on forearm with daughters' names)

SPARE TIME:

Jason loves hunting and fishing.

FAVORITE COLLEGE FOOTBALL TEAM:

Georgia Bulldogs

MARITAL STATUS:

Married—Brittany Kerr

KIDS:

Two girls—Keeley and Kendyl

MUSICAL INFLUENCES:

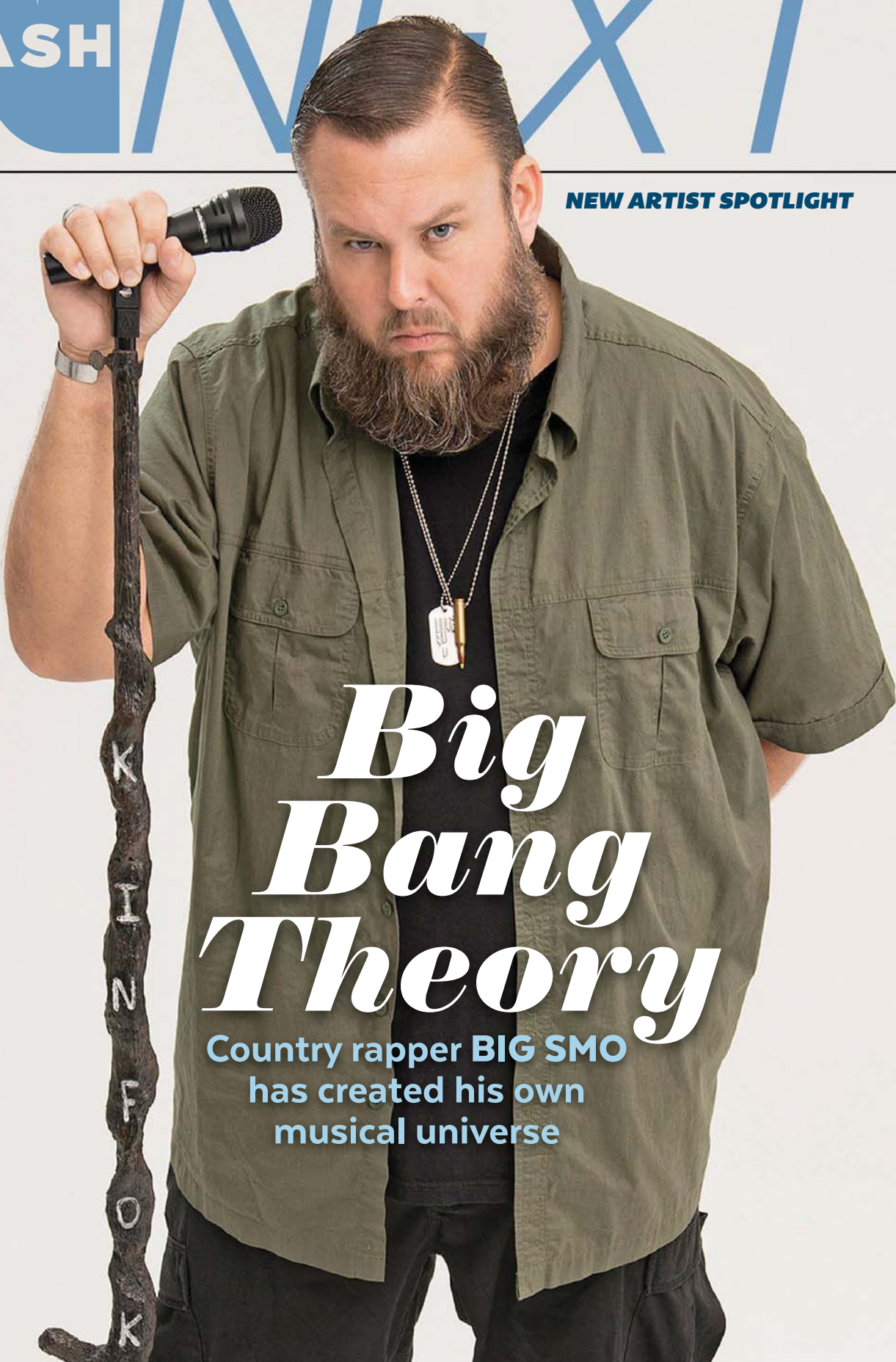
Alabama, Alan Jackson, George Strait

HOT COLLAB:

"The Only Way I Know" with Luke Bryan and Eric Church

NASH NEXT

NEW ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Big Bang Theory

Country rapper **BIG SMO**
has created his own
musical universe

TRAVELIN' MAN

Country rapper BIG SMO gears up for a busy summer and a new season of his A&E reality show.

STORY BY JON FREEMAN

It's one of the terrible ironies of the music industry: the more successful you become as an artist, the more things there are to pull you away from home and everything you hold dear.

For Big Smo, that's his farm and family in Unionville, Tenn., an hour and change southeast of Nashville. He stays there with his wife, Whitney, and daughters, Lanica and Ameria, plus a fleet of grown-up toys like his 1972 Buick Riviera and a 1987 Chevrolet K5 Blazer convertible. For all practical purposes, he's built a little Shangri-La down in the lush Tennessee woods where he spent his childhood.

"I'd run around with my tape deck off in the woods and down at the creek. My dad used to keep this whole creek area mowed and it looked so good," Smo—real name John Smith—tells *Nash Country Weekly*. "My dad really prided himself on his yard work and how he kept what he owned. He had so much pride in what he owned that he made it a paradise. And it wouldn't matter where we were in the world, it was paradise to him."

That notion of home and how it shapes you is a central topic of Smo's new EP, *Bringin' It Home*, which arrived in June. The collection's title track, which kicks off the proceedings with a heavily distorted bass line and Smo's gravelly triplet-feel rhymes, serves as a dual story about the kind of person he is and the way he feels about his country.

"Being a product of who I come from, my father; where I was raised, in the country—home means that to me, is my world," he says. "I know we all exist on

a very large planet, but my planet is out here in the country. And almost regardless of what's happening anywhere else in the world, I [have] made my home a paradise for me and for my family through hard work and through pride and ownership."

But with its imagery of guns at the side and rolling into the fire together, "Bringin' It Home" can also be easily read as a message of support for the troops who sacrifice a big part of their lives in places other than

home, many of which are pretty inhospitable. Having grown up the son of a longtime Navy man, Smo understands that commitment.

"It was like an anthem for anyone who has been on foreign ground or is still on foreign soil, as an anthem for them to return back to their home and what they pride themselves on as their paradise," he notes.

There are echoes of that idea in "Rebel Road," in which Smo embodies the hardworking and weary world

of the long-haul trucker, in a revival of a classic country music trope (though with a trunk-rattling low end). And though he's not exactly sitting behind the wheel of a big rig, Smo has still spent significant hours on the asphalt over the last year rolling between gigs, so he understands the loneliness of the endless miles.

"Even though I'm not out fighting a war or on foreign ground, I am out all over the nation, bringing my entertainment and my story to people and stages every night," he says.

Smo details one of the rejuvenating aspects of home





“MY FORM OF SELF-THERAPY—EVEN AS A KID—WAS TO JUMP IN MY CAR OR MY TRUCK AND GO HIT A BACK ROAD.”

in “Meet Me in the Mud,” where he encourages his “kinfoke” (fans, family or other like-minded friends) to wash their blues away with a heaping helping of the sloppy stuff. *You got something on your mind, go and get stuck*, goes one line.

“I’m a husband. I’m a father. With that responsibility comes a lot of stress, as any husband or father would know,” Smo explains. “There’s a lot of things you have to deal with. My form of self-therapy—even as a kid, whenever I first got my license—was to jump in my car or my truck and go hit a back road.”

He’s not talking about a paved state highway through a farm community, either. He’s talking about the places where the blacktop just runs out completely into dirt or gravel.

“And sometimes that road would lead you to a field where you’d just be like, ‘OK, I’m fixin’ to blow off some steam, and even though this car might get stuck, or this truck might get stuck, I’m gonna do it,’” he explains. “And you just lay into it and go out and cut 15 doughnuts in a field. Go ahead, get stuck, and have a bigger problem on your hands. And then it seems like the problems that you thought you had are very minute. Be stuck in

a field 20 miles from home overnight. And then those problems don’t seem so much like problems anymore.”

While Smo is out there burning up the road, the world will get a glimpse of such cheap forms of therapy when the second season of *Big Smo* airs on A&E (see sidebar). All the while, he’ll be carefully watching his diet and exercise routine after a health scare gave the plus-sized artist a reality check.

After sensing some chest discomfort, Smo visited three hospitals but went undiagnosed. Finally, the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota pinpointed the problem and he was rushed into qua-

druple-bypass surgery. Miraculously, a short three months later he’s fully back in the swing of things.

“It was like when your car’s running bad and you take it in to the shop and then they fix it and you jump in it and it runs like brand-new?” he offers. “That’s what it was like. I was like, ‘Man, I really feel bad.’ I go in for this procedure, then I get out and I’m like, ‘Wow, I really feel good.’ It was like day and night. It’s probably from a lifetime of bad decisions—not exercising on a daily basis, not eating healthy, not paying attention to my health for almost 40 years. That eventually will



perf photo by Rick Diamond/Getty Images; family photo by Zach England/A&E; Smo & Dan courtesy A&E

Reality Check

A&E will soon air the second season of *Big Smo*, focusing on the home and professional life of the artist. While fans got a taste of Smo's homespun philosophy in Season 1, he promises that there will be even more in Season 2.

"We were a little hesitant about being 100 percent us on camera," he recalls of the family's experience during the first season. "Even though I feel like the first season we did a great job, I know we held back a little bit because this was all new to us. The second season, we were more open and we felt more comfortable about sharing who we are and what we do and our lifestyle and not only our ups, but our downs."

He notes that viewers will see Smo and his family go through some health issues, and he has to contend with his daughters growing up. On the business side, Smo gets a couple big opportunities to gig with major country artists and makes the most of it.

"I was able to watch the rough cuts of the second season and I was, honestly, I was impressed," he says. "I was like, wow, I'm impressed with what we've done in this three-and-a-half, four-month span of life that they were able to capture on video. Like, I'm impressed. We've done a lot."



Big Smo and his manager Dan Nelson (right) chat with production crew during filming of *Big Smo* Season 2. (Below, from left) Lanica, Ameria, Smo and Whitney collaborate in the kitchen.



catch up with you."

True to his industrious spirit, Smo has taken that setback and turned it into something positive, sharing his story on the road and encouraging fans to get themselves checked out.

"You meet people that are possibly in the same position you were in. You tell them, 'Hey, if you feel something is going wrong with you, don't ignore it,'" he says, laughing. "There's an opportunity to get it taken care of and you could possibly save your own life. For anybody out there that's, like, [dealing] with weight loss and stuff like that, I'm living proof that it can be done and it doesn't

take some crazy diet and it doesn't take some living in a gym. It just takes some lifestyle changes that you're willing to make to survive. So I've been enjoying and embracing the opportunities that I've been given with this situation."

It's a positive approach to life on the road, when he can't be back home to enjoy his simple pleasures. Those things are becoming more and more of a luxury. Recently, Smo came in from a weekend of shows in Wisconsin and Illinois, whisked the family off to church and sat for dinner with them. Finally, he had a little time for a solo ride in the country.

"Corn is coming in out here in Tennessee right now. It's a little over head high and there's nothing I love more than riding next to a cornfield and watching these stalks of corn create this image next to me," he recalls. "I had to break out my phone and film some of it because I'm going back out on the road tomorrow night. It's like fish in an aquarium. Riding next to the cornfield and having these stalks real quickly go by. It creates this visual effect that's just soothing to my soul."

If you can't always be at home, you can always try to bring a little piece of it with you. **N**



Coming Up Roses

**GREG
BATES AND
SHELLEY
SKIDMORE
TIE THE
KNOT ON
DERBY
DAY.**

IT'S A COUNTRY MUSIC LOVE STORY that we've been following since "Did It for the Girl" singer Greg Bates dropped to one knee at Shiloh United Methodist Church in Stanton, Ky., to ask singer/songwriter Shelley Skidmore to marry him. It was Valentine's Day 2014, in Shelley's hometown church—and there were rose petals shaped in a heart nearby.

Just over a year later, on May 2, 2015, the couple exchanged vows in the same town, but at the Stanton Christian Church, where Shelley's parents were married.

Shelley was stunning in a Lee-Ann Belter strapless, mermaid-style gown, but it was her reception dress that had the sweetest meaning. "It was actually my mama's wedding dress," she reveals. "It was stuffed in my grandmother's garage and my aunt found it just a couple of months before the wedding." As opposed to returning it to an attic, Shelley's mother offered it to her daughter, who took it to a designer in Nashville who repurposed it for her. And those magenta pumps? "My maid-of-honor surprised me with those Ted Baker shoes," she says, laughing.

The entire wedding was an event focused on friends and family. Shelley's attendants included her cousin Whitney Hall, who was maid-of-honor, along with Abby Osburn, Christina Jense, Ellen Schoenthaler and Meghan Mouser. Greg's best man was his brother Chris, but Shelley's brother, Jonathan Skidmore, also stood with him, as did Brian Morris, Kenley Flynn and Matt Rausch. And the precious flower girl and ring bearer? Abby's children Maggie and Mason.

Absent from the wedding party was the couple's four-legged family member, Chesney. "She did come out during

the reception," notes Shelley of their toy poodle.

Greg and Shelley kept it country and Kentucky-themed for the reception, where guests visited food stations that had comfort foods like shrimp and grits, short ribs and biscuits. And there were mint juleps to sip, too. "We had the Kentucky Derby live-streaming because it was Derby Day," explains Shelley. "So we were serving mint juleps and everyone could watch the race while we were taking pictures."

Getting married in Stanton meant old friends could take part in very special ways for the couple. "Getting married in my hometown was truly a dream come true for me because Nancy Birch made the wedding cake and she had made every birthday cake I ever had," Shelley exclaimed. "Our florist at Blessings Floral Designs is one of my mom's best friends."

After a seven-day honeymoon at the Hard Rock Resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, the couple returned to Nashville and are working hard on their individual projects. Greg's new single, "Sand," is heading to country radio and, he says, "I'm working on and recording new music." Shelley, too, is in the studio recording an album. "We cut five sides and Greg did a duet with me on there, so that was fun."

Are any other collaborations—like ones of a more personal nature—in the works? Greg and Shelley both laugh. "We absolutely plan on a family," Greg says. Shelley agrees, but adds, "Not anytime in the super-near future, we have a lot of stuff to do, but we absolutely do want that."

Greg assures us, "You'll be our first call."

TAMMY RAGUSA



From the church to the flowers to the photographer and cake, Shelley and Greg kept everything local to Shelley's Kentucky roots, but their musical backgrounds were reflected in Shelley's gift to Greg—a Gibson 335 guitar.





photos by David Lang/Cooking Channel

RARE AIR

***Kix Brooks** forks over the answer as he seeks out the country's top steakhouses in a new Cooking Channel series.*

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

THERE'S MORE TO BEING a true "steakhouse" than merely serving up a great steak. Just ask Kix Brooks, the singer/songwriter and one-half of the much-awarded duo Brooks & Dunn. Or better yet, follow him.

You can join Kix as he travels the highways of America seeking out the country's most flavorful steakhouses on a new Cooking Channel series, *Steak Out With Kix Brooks*, premiering on July 14. Each Tuesday at 9 p.m. E/T, Kix and crew head to a city known for its culinary scene and visit three select steakhouses. The steakhouse chefs whip up one of their masterpieces for Kix to sample, while explaining what gives their establishment that unique touch.

Pretty tasty side gig, right? Kix, who knows a thing or two about the business of beef (he raises his own cattle at his spread outside Nashville), agrees that the Cooking Channel plays into one of his earthy passions.

"I love cooking, and I've pretty much got the outdoor grill going all the time," says Kix, who has recently reteamed with his Brooks & Dunn mate Ronnie Dunn for a series of Las Vegas shows. "I really love a good steak, and this show is playing right into that."

Things heat up right from the premiere episode when Kix checks out steakhouses in the epicenter of steak, if you will, Omaha, Neb. "You always hear about Omaha and their great steaks," Kix begins. "But the

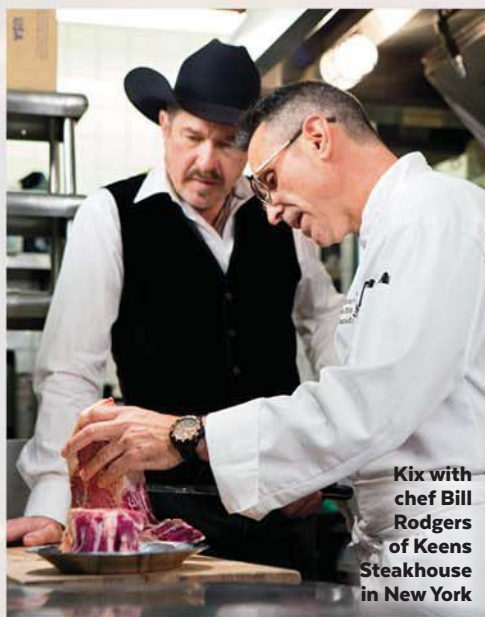
place really is that good. Their steakhouses are outstanding. In fact, there were a couple steakhouses that we went to in other cities that get their steaks from Omaha. The city just kind of defines steak."

Narrowing the field to three Omaha steakhouses proved a meaty task. The three that made the final cut, so to speak, were Dario's, the nearly 100-year-old Johnny's Cafe and Gorat's, reputed to be the favorite steakhouse of billionaire businessman Warren Buffett.

"I have heard that he eats there all the time," Kix says. "He had been there the night before we filmed our segment there." And just for the record, insiders share that Mr. Buffett's personal fave is Gorat's T-bone steak, cooked on the rare side, with a double order of hash browns.

Johnny's Cafe, located near the Omaha stockyards, met one of the show's criteria, namely a spot that serves up a bit of history along with wonderful food. "It's a third generation place that was founded in the 1920s," Kix explains. "The family still runs the steakhouse. A lot of these places that we went to are like virtual

museums. There was a steakhouse in New York City called Keens where there are all these rows of clay pipes." The pipes have been provided to the restaurant's famous clientele for after-dinner smoking over the years, and the members of the so-called Pipe Club include Buffalo Bill Cody, Teddy Roosevelt, Albert Einstein and contemporary comic Jimmy Fallon. "And



Kix with chef Bill Rodgers of Keens Steakhouse in New York



Great steak deserves a fine wine.

BIG STEAKS, BIG REDS

Wine connoisseur Kix Brooks offers his recommendations for steak/wine pairings.

Kix Brooks is a man of many interests that go beyond his singing and songwriting expertise. He also hosts the NASH radio shows *American Country Countdown* and *Kickin' It With Kix*, raises cattle and runs his own winery, Arrington Vineyards, just outside of Nashville.

As he's now hosting a Cooking Channel show devoted to steakhouses, we asked Kix to combine that pursuit with his wine knowledge and recommend certain steak/wine pairings. He gladly obliged.

"With any cut of steak," Kix says, "you absolutely have to go with what experts call the 'big reds.' For a strip or a filet or a rib-eye, I tend to lean toward cabernets or a merlot. I'm not a huge pinot noir fan, but that does go well with steak. I'll also pair a Syrah with a rib-eye sometimes. Certain cuts of steak, like an oxtail, for instance, is treated like a short rib, and a Burgundy might go well with that."

And why reds? Kix explains, "Tannins are in big reds and they will really help you hold the taste of beef in your mouth and make it a long finish." Tannins are important components of wine, as they help preserve it for long-term aging, provide structure and add a slight bitterness for flavor complexity.

"The main thing is to pair steak with big reds," Kix reiterates. "I love white wine, but it just doesn't work with steak."

KIX BROOKS CONTINUED

now me!" Kix proudly proclaims. So, put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Steak Out With Kix Brooks provides big portions of fun for the host but, make no mistake, the segments constitute hard work at lightning speed. "The people on this crew don't mess around," Kix says almost breathlessly as he recalls the days of shooting. "They jump right into the kitchen and they get everything set up and they light it. They are really geared for running and gunning. Everything moves really fast, but they don't sacrifice quality."

Kix adds that he and the crew spend almost an entire day in one steakhouse. That doesn't mean, however, that the venue closes shop for the crew. The steakhouses are open for business, which is actually what the show prefers for reasons of atmosphere and real-life TV ambience. Most customers take the presence of cameras in stride, but there are times when Kix has to don his public relations hat and bring out that smiling country charm.

"These are big-time steakhouses and the patrons are coming in expecting a level of service and a great dining experience," Kix says. "They didn't necessarily sign on to bring their friends in for a big dinner and then have a TV crew in



(Clockwise, from top right) Kix chats with a diner at Sammy's Steakhouse in New York; meets with chef Hugue Dufour of M. Wells Steakhouse and cuts up at Sammy's.

their face. There is some negotiating and smoothing people's feathers. I'll sit down with them and say, 'Look, I know you didn't come in here to have some hillbilly singer ruin your dinner.' That breaks the ice a little bit. I explain what we're trying to do and how we'd love to share this experience with them. Obviously, if people are trying to have a business lunch or dinner, they might not want to participate, and you have to respect that."

Subsequent *Steak Out* stops include Dallas/Fort Worth on the July 21 epi-

sode, as well as Denver and New York. "Our mission is to not be redundant," Kix pronounces. "We try to find places that have an interesting story that viewers will enjoy and maybe enlighten people a little bit."

The first season has been filmed and Kix eagerly hopes for a second helping. "We did a pilot earlier this year and the ratings were good, so the Cooking Channel gave it the green light," Kix says. "We just had a ball eating and playing and filming. We have one season under our belts—so we'll see what happens from here." **NCW**

Train at home to

Work at Home

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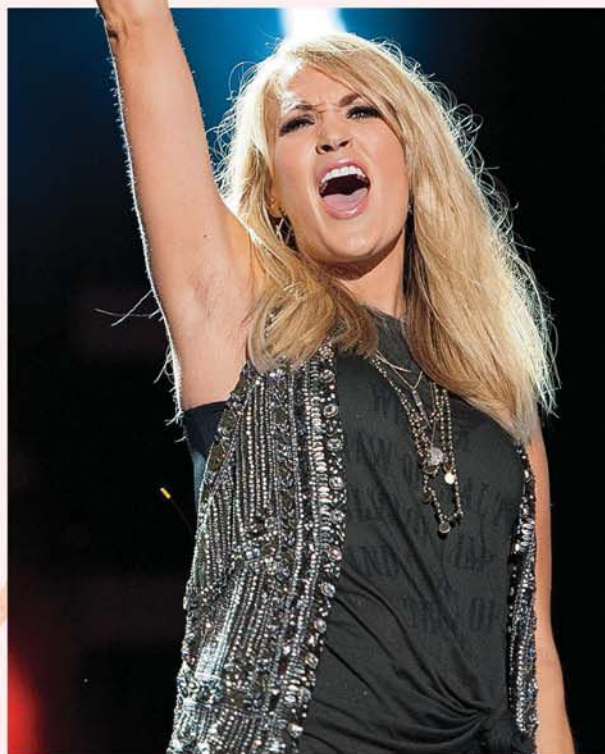
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KILLER TOMATOES



CARRIE UNDERWOOD

NO. 1 TUNES:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| "Jesus, Take the Wheel" 2005 | "Cowboy Casanova" 2009 |
| "Before He Cheats" 2006 | "Temporary Home" 2009 |
| "Wasted" 2007 | "Undo It" 2010 |
| "So Small" 2007 | "Good Girl" 2012 |
| "All-American Girl" 2008 | "Blown Away" 2012 |
| "Last Name" 2008 | "Something in the Water" 2014 |
| "Just a Dream" 2008 | "Little Toy Guns" 2015 |

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: If it seems like just yesterday that a fresh-faced 22-year-old with a voice 10 times her size was crushing the competition on *American Idol*, you're not alone. But Carrie's *Idol* win was in 2005, and a lot has happened to her in the 10 years since claiming the Season 4 title, including scoring 15 No. 1 *Billboard* singles (14 on the country charts), selling more than 64 million records, winning seven Grammys, joining the Grand Ole Opry, getting married and becoming a mother. That's a nice little decade by anyone's standards, and it doesn't sound like Carrie is going to be slowing down anytime soon, as she's currently working on her upcoming fifth studio album.

It's never been an easy battle for women in country radio, but are things changing? We look back to see what was different about the female No. 1s in the 21st century.

BY THE NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY STAFF

A few very interesting things happened in music the week of June 21, 2015. On the strength of her irresistible debut single, "Love Me Like You Mean It," Kelsea Ballerini ascended to the No. 1 spot on the *Billboard* Country Airplay chart—marking the first time a solo female artist's debut had done that since Carrie Underwood's "Jesus, Take the Wheel" in 2006 and only the 11th in country history.

Texas firebrand Sunny Sweeney, working in a decidedly male field, topped both Texas music charts with her song "My Bed," giving her back-to-back No. 1s. It was the only time in Texas chart history a female artist has ever done that.

Fellow Texan Kacey Musgraves released her sophomore album, *Pagan Material*. The critical hosannas rolled in fast and furious, hailing her as country's sharpest writer.

Meanwhile, Taylor Swift (who gave Kelsea's tune a big social media boost) was busy upending the entire music industry. On June 21, she penned an open letter to Apple to let them know she would be withholding her album *1989* from their new streaming music product Apple Music because they weren't paying royalties to songwriters and publishers during their free three-month promotional period.

"We don't ask you for free iPhones," she said. "Please don't ask us to provide you with our music for no compensation."

Within one day, Apple reversed course and vowed to pay the royalties.

All were significant achievements in their own way, and important reminders of just how vital women are in music, not just country music. Yet the country radio landscape remains, to borrow consultant Keith Hill's term, lettuce without much in the way of toppings—

tomato or otherwise. Kelsea's ascent to the top of the charts was a stark—if encouraging—reminder of that reality.

While the '90s and early '00s were certainly a boom time (if not exactly a dominant one) for female country artists, it's been nearly since the start of the millennium that they were reaching No. 1 with any regularity. More often than not, a female voice has been accompanied by male ones (pretty common) or another female (far more rare) when climbing the charts.

In this cover feature, we've counted 15 solo female artists, including Kelsea, Carrie Underwood and Faith Hill, who reached the top in the 21st century and we consider what their contributions to country music have meant. We've also given some breakout focus to female country artists whose work shifted the very foundation of the genre.

As a wise philosopher once noted, this one's for the girls women.



MIRANDA LAMBERT

NO. 1 TUNES:

"The House That Built Me" 2010

"Heart Like Mine" 2011

"Over You" 2012

"Somethin' Bad" 2014

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: Over the last 10 years, Miranda Lambert has turned into an unstoppable musical force, winning six consecutive ACM Female Vocalist of the Year awards, five consecutive CMA Female Vocalist of the Year awards and two Grammys, as well as releasing five consecutive *Billboard* No. 1 albums, four of which were certified platinum. But Miranda is not just about the accolades—she has used her platform to champion other ladies in the industry. In addition to giving a voice to talented songwriters like Natalie Hemby, Brandy Clark and Nicolle Galyon, Miranda has supported artists such as Ashley Monroe, RaeLynn, Gwen Sebastian, Sunny Sweeney and Clare Dunn by featuring them on her recent tours.



KELSEA BALLERINI

NO. 1 TUNE: “Love Me Like You Mean It”

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: Crowned one of CMT's Next Women of Country in 2014, Kelsea lived up to her billing by taking her debut single, "Love Me Like You Mean It," straight to the top of *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart in June 2015. In doing so, the singer/songwriter joined an elite group of solo female artists to reach No. 1 with their debut single, including Faith Hill, Trisha Yearwood and Carrie Underwood. For now, Kelsea is celebrating the release of her debut album, *The First Time*, and carrying the torch for new female country artists as she looks to the light the way for others.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

mountain. Since bursting onto the scene in 1997 with their major-label debut album, *Wide Open Spaces*, the Dixie Chicks have scored a number of chart-toppers, including “Without You” in 2000 and “Travelin’ Soldier” in 2002, while The Wreckers, a duo comprised of Michelle Branch and Jessica Harp, left their mark at the top with “Leave the Pieces” in 2006. Maddie & Tae recently joined their esteemed colleagues in the club, as their debut single, “Girl in a Country Song,” found a home at No. 1 in 2014.

TAYLOR SWIFT

NO. 1 TUNES:

“Our Song” 2007

“Should’ve Said No” 2008

“Love Story” 2009

"You Belong With Me" 2009

“Sparks Fly” 2011

“Ours” 2011

“We Are Never Ever Getting

Back Together" 2013

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: For as much as she's the biggest star on the planet right now, Taylor Swift amassed only a modest collection of *Billboard* country No. 1s before going on to conquer pop music. Though instantly popular with her debut single, "Tim McGraw," Taylor was repeatedly held at No. 2 even as she rose to spectacular heights of international fame and mounted headlining tours before she was 20. That didn't dull her creative spark one bit; each new release from Taylor, including *1989*, has shown new layers in her songwriting ability. Though country sorely misses her (and all the records she sells), we're all excited to see what she'll do next.



REBA McENTIRE

NO. 1 TUNES:

"Somebody" 2004

"Consider Me Gone" 2010

"Turn On the Radio" 2011

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

When you're talking about "girl power," Reba practically wrote the definition herself. And that's more than just chart dominance, although Reba has plenty to show in that area, with 24 *Billboard* No. 1 hits spanning an incredible four decades. Reba has also taught today's women how to handle their business and expand their brand into other arenas, as she's done with her Dillard's lines of apparel and household items. And age? Forget about it. At 60, Reba continues to make records and fire up audiences with a stage show that exudes as much energy as any youngster can muster.



SETTING A NEW TONE

The world was ready for **SHANIA TWAIN**. The time was right for a different voice and a new tone from a female country singer, and Shania delivered right on cue. She came to town in the mid-1990s brandishing a new form of feminism: assertiveness mixed with an unmistakable beauty and natural charm that won over both male and female listeners.

After a couple of false starts with underperforming singles, Shania finally released one that clicked, "Any Man of Mine" in 1995 (and has it really been 20 years?). Fans loved the sass and attitude of the message, but more than that, they gravitated to the new sound Shania was putting out there, a truly danceable mix of country storytelling and pop production. Her looks didn't hurt, either. Shania brought a certain glamour and sex appeal to the music. While she can't be single-handedly credited with reviving the genre in the '90s, Shania definitely was responsible for recruiting a new wave of fans over to country music.

And whoever calculated that females couldn't sell albums didn't reckon with Shania. Her 1995 album, *The Woman in Me*, moved more than 12 million copies in the United States alone. Proving that was no fluke, her follow-up, 1997's *Come On Over*, racked up 20 million sales in the U.S. and around the same number overseas, making it the largest-selling album by a female artist in any genre.

If today's crop of female stars is searching for inspiration, there's no finer role model than Shania. For many up-and-comers, she's "still the one."



MARTINA McBRIDE

NO. 1 TUNE: "Blessed"

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

Owing much to influences like Linda Ronstadt and Patsy Cline, Martina brought the "big voice" back to country music, at least on the female side. She could soar with an incredible range, yet was savvy enough to know when to reign herself in. Her vocal prowess was duly noted with three straight Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year awards from 2002 to 2004, despite not having a slew of No. 1 hits. Martina is still wielding an impact today. Her 2014 album of soul and R&B standards, *Everlasting*, garnered rave reviews and pushed her back into the national spotlight. And though she didn't enjoy a huge radio single in 2014, Martina nonetheless scored a CMA award nomination for Female Vocalist of the Year. That's called "respect."



THE LADIES OF COUNTRY CONT.

FAITH HILL

NO. 1 TUNES:

"The Way You Love Me" 2000

"Mississippi Girl" 2005

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

Faith was a '90s phenomenon who showed no loss of staying power as the new century got underway. With husband Tim McGraw, she hit the road in the early 2000s and became part of two of the most successful tours in country history, Soul2Soul and Soul2Soul II. Those who may have dismissed her as nothing more than a pretty flash in the pan after her first two singles hit the top have had to munch on those unkind words for more than a decade.



HEY, LADIES!

Make fabulous your playlist with these female-led singles from 2015.

"Love Me Like You Mean It"
Kelsea Ballerini

"Little Toy Guns"
Carrie Underwood

"Girl Crush"
Little Big Town

"Fly"
Maddie & Tae

"Going Out Like That"
Reba McEntire

"Burning House"
Cam

"Smokin' & Drinkin'"
Miranda Lambert

"Me and Johnny Cash"
Rainey Qualley

"Throw It Back"
Gwen Sebastian

"I Got the Boy"
Jana Kramer

"Move On"
Clare Dunn

"For a Boy"
RaeLynn

"My Bed"
Sunny Sweeney
with Will Hoge

"On to Something Good"
Ashley Monroe

"Ramblin' Man"
Ruthie Collins

"I Remember You"
Trisha Yearwood

"Send It On Down"
Lee Ann Womack

"Biscuits"
Kacey Musgraves



LEE ANN WOMACK

NO. 1 TUNE:

"I Hope You Dance" 2000

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

One of country's all-time great voices, Lee Ann Womack released what would become her signature song right at the dawn of the 2000s. "I Hope You Dance," written by Mark D. Sanders and Tia Sillers, blended Lee Ann's perfectly modulated country croon with a pop-leaning arrangement and lyrics of unwavering optimism to make a chart-topping classic. Lee Ann has since followed her own mercurial muse back through the award-winning 2005 album *There's More Where That Came From* and to an excellent, roots-oriented 2014 collection, *The Way I'm Livin'*.



JAMIE O'NEAL

NO. 1 TUNES:

"There Is No Arizona" 2001

"When I Think About Angels" 2001

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: A lot of women toddle into Nashville barely able to drive, much less order a shot, but Jamie O'Neal cruised into town and ordered a double straight up with her back-to-back chart-toppers. A decade before she rolled into Music City, the native Aussie had already been the doo-wop girl on worldwide tours with pop star Kylie Minogue, so she *knew* a thing or 10 about "the biz," and her BS meter was fine-tuned. So, when finding a new label wasn't working for her, she just started her own—Momentum Label Group. She recruited Rachele Lynae as her flagship artist and in 2014 nodded to her influences with a collection of classic country covers called *Eternal*.

JO DEE MESSINA

NO. 1 TUNES:

"That's the Way" 2000

"Bring On the Rain" (with Tim McGraw) 2002

"My Give a Damn's Busted" 2005

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: If piss and vinegar are key elements to success, then that explains Jo Dee Messina's rise up the country charts. Well before the calendar page turned to 2000, she had scored three chart-toppers and four more Top 10 singles, before earning three more in the 2000s. She's far from finished and her fans say so. This no-holds-barred, gregarious singer/songwriter didn't wait around for another binding label contract. Last year her fans helped fund her fifth studio album, *Me*, on her own Dreambound Records label, and she has even more in the works.



TRUE BLUE ALISON KRAUSS

When it comes to solo No. 1 hits on the country radio charts, the closest Alison Krauss got was in 1995 when her cover of Keith Whitley's "When You Say Nothing at All" peaked at No. 3. But charts? She don't need no stinkin' charts. She's got 27 Grammy awards, 14 Bluegrass Musician awards and nine CMA awards. Remember, that's nine without benefit of a hit country single. Of course, she was part of the incredibly successful Grammy-winning soundtrack *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and she's lent her ethereal vocals to duets such as the Kenny Rogers hit "Buy Me a Rose" and Brad Paisley's "Whiskey Lullaby." So, in the eyes of country music fans, her country music peers and even CMT, who in 2011 slotted her at No. 8 on their list of the 20 Greatest Women of Country Music, Alison is C-O-U-N-T-R-Y. We'll take her!

SARA EVANS

NO. 1 TUNES:

"Born to Fly" 2001

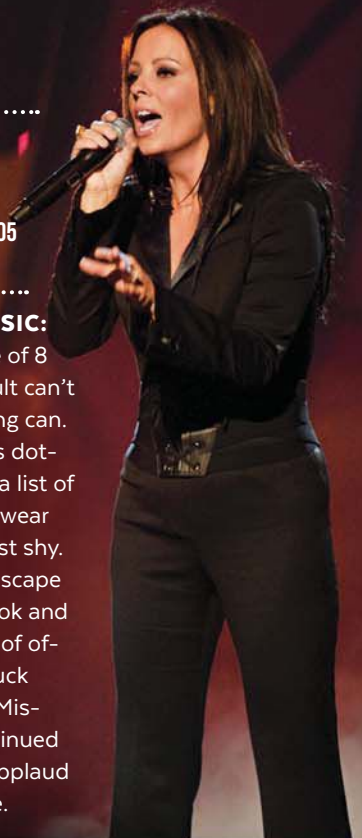
"Suds in the Bucket" 2004

"A Real Fine Place to Start" 2005

"A Little Bit Stronger" 2011

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

If being hit by a car at the age of 8 and a nasty divorce as an adult can't slow Sara Evans down, nothing can. Sara's nearly 20-year career is dotted with No. 1 singles among a list of recognizable hits you would swear were chart-toppers but fell just shy. Probably because as the landscape of country music shifted, shook and switched around her, instead of offering country radio some shuck and jive, she maintained her Missouri farm-girl roots and continued to twang. For that, Sara, we applaud you and look forward to more.



CYNDI THOMSON

NO. 1 TUNE:

"What I Really Meant to Say" 2001

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

Back before Georgia artists were taking over the music scene, Cyndi Thomson was doing her part in making the Peach State proud. She released her first and only album, *My World*, in 2001, which spawned her very first No. 1 single, "What I Really Meant to Say," and the follow-up hit "I Always Liked That Best." She went on to release a couple more singles in 2002, the same year she married DJ Goodman and stepped down from the spotlight to focus on the next chapter in her life. She and DJ welcomed daughter Bella in 2005 and son Hayden in 2009. Cyndi quietly began to work on new music three years ago, which will be released independently later this year.



WHEN WOMEN RULED RADIO



The one outlying period in the history of country music where women have had a bigger share of the pie at radio happened not that long ago, during the '90s. While the overall total of No. 1 hits may not have been incredibly high (the '90s were a fertile period for country music all around, remember?), the concentration of female artists or female-led groups getting significant airplay was considerably higher than now. Among this diverse group of stars, several stood out in their own way:



PATTY LOVELESS brought a traditional spin to her songs like "Blame It on Your Heart" (a No. 1) and "You Don't Even Know Who I Am," earning her numerous Top 10 hits.

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER was the intellectual songwriter whose character studies like "I'll Take My Chances" helped her album *Come On*

Come On sell more than 4 million copies.



Before she became tabloid fodder, teenaged **LeANN**

RIMES left jaws agape with the raw power of her voice on her blockbuster debut album, *Blue*,

which featured her only No. 1, "One Way Ticket."

TRISHA YEARWOOD hit No. 1 with her 1991 debut single, "She's in Love With the Boy." She's lost none



of her vocal firepower all these years later, and the fact that Sam Hunt covers "She's in Love With the Boy" should tell you everything. Starting slightly ahead of the

'90s, **SUZIE BOGGUSS** found a precise blend of the traditional and contemporary with hits like "Drive South."

Although daughter to an Opry legend, **PAM TILLIS** worked hard to define herself apart from her father, Mel, and succeeded many times over with hits like "Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)" and "Maybe It Was Memphis."





GRETCHEN WILSON

NO. 1 TUNE:

"Redneck Woman" 2004

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

Whether she intended to or not, Gretchen Wilson started a whole new conversation about class in country music with "Redneck Woman," her only No. 1. Rather than look like the polished, red carpet-ready country singers of years past, Gretchen loudly and proudly declared her love for drinking beer and singing Tanya Tucker songs, not really giving a rip if cosmopolitan types thought less of her. It was such a potent message that her debut album, *Here for the Party*, went on to be certified five times platinum. She's kept up a steady flow of releases since then, including 2013's triple platter of albums that included *Right on Time*.



TERRI CLARK

NO. 1 TUNE: "Girls Lie Too" 2004

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC: Terri Clark just missed having her first No. 1 hit in 1995 with her first two singles, "Better Things to Do" and "When Boy Meets Girl" (both which peaked at No. 3), but she wasn't complaining one bit. The early success set her up for a long, steady career in country music. Most recently, Terri released her latest single, "I Cheated on You," which can be found on her 2014 album, *Some Songs*. In addition to cranking out new music, fans of Terri can catch her as a featured co-host on the radio program *America's Morning Show*, broadcast weekdays by NASH.



JESSICA ANDREWS

NO. 1 TUNE:

"Who I Am" 2001

IMPACT ON COUNTRY MUSIC:

Jessica Andrews was known in the late '90s as the young teen with the big voice. She first hit the scene with her debut single, "I Will Be There for You," but her biggest charting success came two years later with "Who I Am." The song, from her sophomore album of the same name, marked Jessica's only

No. 1 career hit. She released a third album, *Now*, in 2003, and shortly after was left without a label when Dreamworks closed its doors. She still plays many songwriters' nights around Nashville and released a single called "The Clown" to iTunes in 2014. **NCW**

LIGHTS, CAMERA, *ACTION!*

Country music stars and fans turned out in big numbers to celebrate the CMT MUSIC AWARDS.



Carrie Underwood

Darius Rucker

Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban

Maddie & Tae

The vibe at the CMT Music Awards is a little different than at other country music awards shows. Attire is often more casual than suits, gowns and high-dollar baubles—more boots, less bling. And the energy is palpable. That's due, in large part, to the number of country music fans in town for Nashville's CMA Music Festival. For the fans, it's a chance to cheer on all of their favorite stars in one setting and be a part of the magic that is country music. Besides, they voted for their favorite artists and videos to become final nominees; they should be a part of the big night.

It was certainly a big night for Carrie Underwood, who took home three buckle trophies: one for her collaboration with Miranda Lambert, "Somethin' Bad," and two—Video of the Year and Female Video of the Year—for her own "Something in the Water." Carrie, who hasn't made many high-profile public appearances since giving birth to her son, Isaiah, was delightfully charming and genuine, seemingly overwhelmed by the wins.

Lady Antebellum kicked off the night's performances with "Long Stretch of Love" before bringing German DJ, artist and producer Zedd to the stage for a chorus of his hit "Beautiful Now." That opened a virtual floodgate of great music from country's heavy-hitters and hottest rookies in the biz. With performances from Luke Bryan, Darius Rucker, Keith Urban, Jake Owen and Sam Hunt, the audience was on their feet for most of the night.

And to further drive home the point that country music is America's music, CMT welcomed a diverse array of celebrities—including actors David Spade, Tom Arnold and Norman Reedus of *The Walking Dead*, actor and politician Arnold Schwarzenegger, musicians Steven Tyler, Rick Springfield and Justin Bieber, and the Houston Texans' JJ Watt—as presenters, guests and in cameo appearances.

Congratulations to all of the night's winners and to the best fans in the world!



RaeLynn

Craig Campbell with daughter Preslee

Ashley Monroe



Florida
Georgia
Line



Kelsea
Ballerini



Sam
Hunt



Luke Bryan (right) inspires
Lady Antebellum's Charles
Kelley to kick up some dust.



Jason
Aldean



Lady
Antebellum



Darius
Rucker

BLOCK-BUSTER VIDEOS

HERE'S THE LIST OF ARTISTS WHO TOOK HOME A CMT AWARD.

VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Carrie Underwood
"Something in the Water"

MALE VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Luke Bryan
"Play It Again"

FEMALE VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Carrie Underwood
"Something in the Water"

GROUP VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Lady Antebellum
"Bartender"

BREAKTHROUGH VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Sam Hunt
"Leave the Night On"

DUO VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Florida Georgia Line
"Dirt"

COLLABORATIVE VIDEO OF THE YEAR

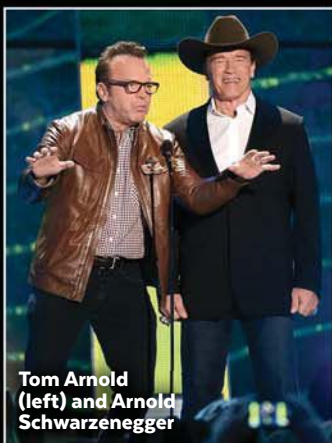
Miranda Lambert and Carrie Underwood
"Somethin' Bad"

CMT PERFORMANCE OF THE YEAR

Bob Seger and Jason Aldean
"Turn the Page"



Jake Owen kicks his feet up before working the crowd into a frenzy.



Tom Arnold (left) and Arnold Schwarzenegger



RaeLynn



Reba McEntire



David Spade's Joe Dirt gives Erin Andrews (left) and Brittany Snow something to smile about.



Zac Brown gets a salute from Lady Antebellum's Hillary Scott.



Chris Janson

BATTLE LINES

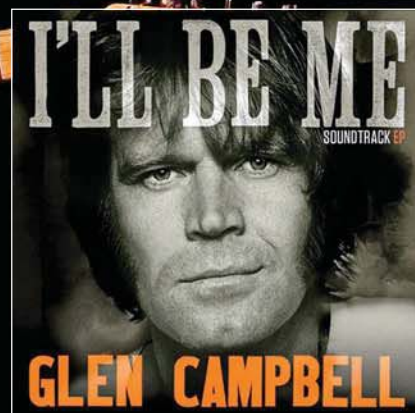
GLEN CAMPBELL'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS CONTINUE THEIR WAR AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S.

IT TOOK THREE YEARS for director/producer James Keach and Kim Campbell to complete *Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me*, the film that honors Country Music Hall of Fame member—and Kim's husband—Glen Campbell. More than that, it tracks his descent into the abyss of Alzheimer's disease as he undertook what he knew would be his last concert tour, beginning in 2011.

Released in 2014, *Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me* has been viewed by thousands of people. Many were drawn by their love for the country music, television and film legend. Others came because they, too, were giving care to loved ones being lost to Alzheimer's.

But almost no one expected that this release would be only the beginning of an ongoing and very personal campaign to battle this ailment.

"I think we sensed that we had much more to do during the editing process and the beginning of the screening process, too," says James, whose credits include producing the Johnny Cash biopic *Walk the Line* with Cathy Konrad. "We screened it one night at the Music City Center in Nashville. Four thousand people were



Glen by Michael Buckner/Getty Images; Shamoon, Kim, Glen & Ashley by Christopher Polk/Getty Images; James by Rick Diamond/Getty Images

there. Afterward, we did a concert. The Band Perry and Ashley Campbell [Glen's daughter] played. While they were setting up, I asked the audience, 'How many people here have family members that are caregivers or have been affected by Alzheimer's?' And the whole damn place stood up."

In short order, James, Kim and their team declared war on Alzheimer's. With ongoing support from Volunteers of America, which had sponsored the film's release, and other organizations, including the Mayo Clinic and Eli Lilly, the I'll Be Me Fund was created and mobilized to provide support for Alzheimer's caregivers, fund research and to raise awareness through local meetings and by showing the film throughout the United States.

"The Mayo Clinic, Easter Seals, AARP—all these different organizations are playing it, so we don't have to go to Regal Cinema and say, 'Hey, how much is it going to cost us to put this in your theater?'" James says. "I've probably been to 75 screenings already."

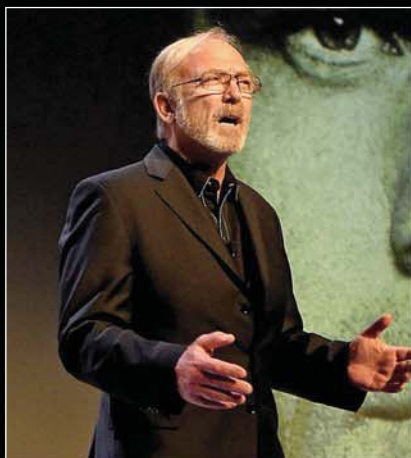
Interest in Glen's story also opened doors on Capitol Hill, where James and Kim met with House Speaker John Boehner, Representative Nancy Pelosi and other leaders. Ashley testified before Congress and Glen performed a private concert for lawmakers.

"We were trying to get them to allocate more funds to the National Institute of Health," Kim says. "We were talking also about how \$6 billion a year goes to cancer research, \$5 billion goes to heart disease and \$3 billion to AIDS research. But at that time, only \$400 million was going to all neurological diseases—Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, ataxia and things like that. Yet more than 5 million people in America have Alzheimer's—and it's probably triple that soon."

Kim's dedication is not only to aid those who, like her husband, suffer from Alzheimer's, but also to bring comfort and support to caregivers. "Sixty percent of caregivers are extremely depressed," she says. "I know



Glen with wife Kim and their son Shannon and daughter Ashley during the 2012 CMT Music Awards; (below) director James Keach



I am. I struggle with depression every morning and every night. All through the day, I'm always on the verge of tears. It's just heartbreaking when your husband has Alzheimer's. That's the father of your children and the love of our life. It's such an emotional thing to deal with on a daily basis. It's an incredible burden when you're caring 24/7 for somebody who has cognitive disability."

The catch in Kim's voice confirms the truth of her words. Since the film was completed, the Glen Campbell she loves has slipped further from view. "He understands hugs and smiles and laughter, but I don't think he recognizes anyone at this point. I feel like he recognizes me because of the way he kisses me. He kisses me like I'm his wife. But," she says, with heartbreaking resignation, "it's wan-

ing, his recognition even of me."

Even so, the country music community has maintained its support for Glen. "He gets lots of visits from musicians who will come and play music for him and hang out and hug him," Kim confirms. "Seals & Crofts visited the other day. So did Duane Allen from The Oak Ridge Boys. Kenny Rogers will call and ask how Glen is doing. Larry Weiss, who wrote 'Rhinestone Cowboy,' and Carl Jackson, who was Glen's banjo player for 12 years, visit him weekly. Toby Keith's manager, TK Kimbrell, Glen's close friend for so many years, comes every week, too."

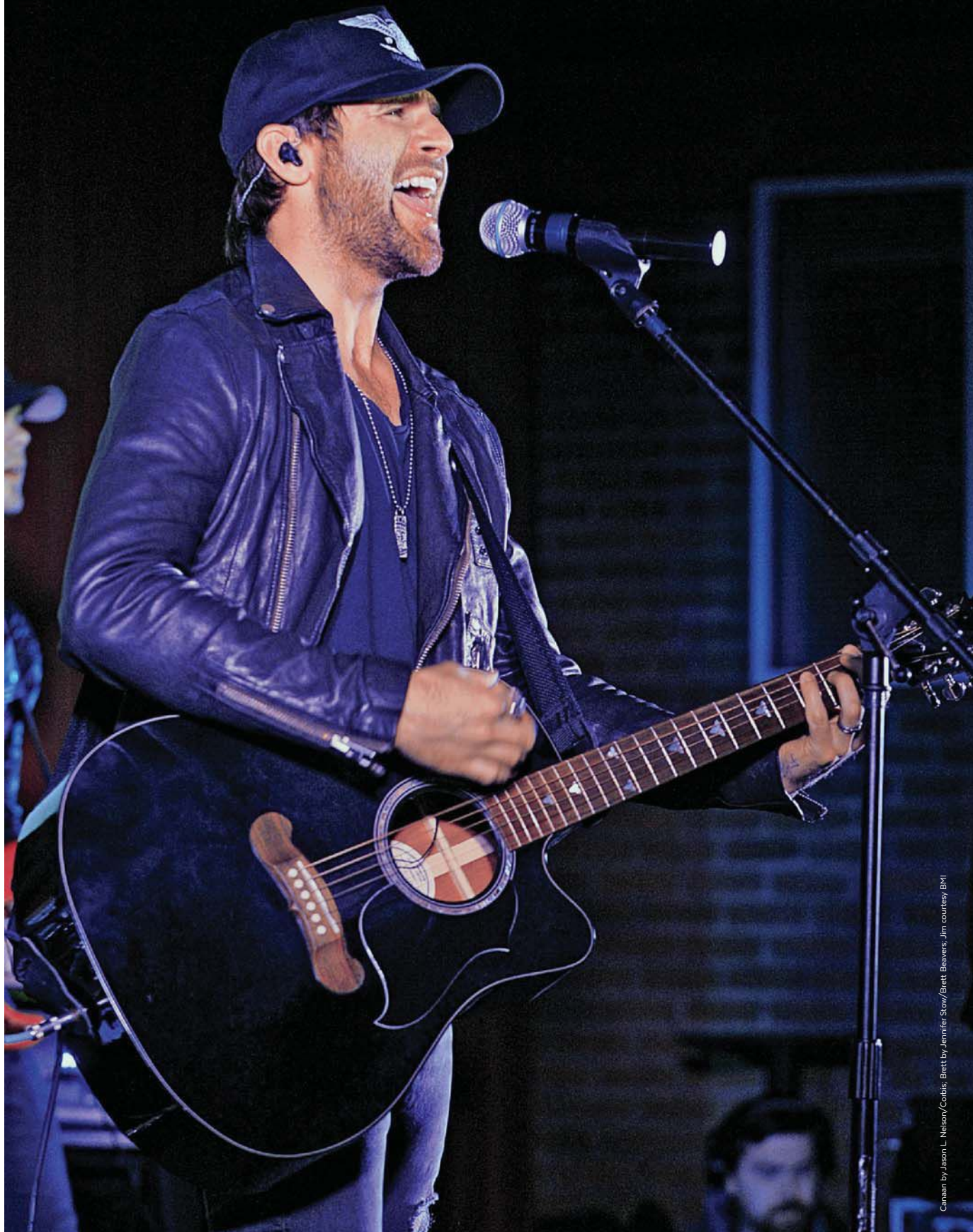
"What was it that Shakespeare said?" James asks. "His big manly voice, turning again toward childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history, is second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

A moment of silence follows this quote from *As You Like It*. Then James muses, "Glen has become my teacher, in a very strange way. He has taught me all about living in the moment and embracing life instead of worrying about the past and fearing the future."

Learn more about Alzheimer's at alz.org. To arrange or attend local screenings of *Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me*, visit glencampbellmovie.com.

BOB DOERSCHUK

BEHIND THE SONG



Canaan by Jason L. Nelson/Corbis; Brett by Jennifer Stow/Brett Beavers; Jim courtesy BMI

DEMO DERBY

BRETT BEAVERS HAS BEEN dabbling in the world of songwriting and producing new acts for quite some time, his biggest success coming from working with Dierks Bentley in the early 2000s. A similar situation happened a few years later when Brett crossed paths with another aspiring singer/songwriter, one by the name of Canaan Smith. Brett was eager to share some of Canaan's early demos with his brother Jim Beavers, and little did he know that doing so would land them all in the Top 10 on the country singles charts.

"When Brett first started sending me some of the demos, I texted him back immediately and said, 'I want to write with whoever is singing and writing those songs!'" Jim recalls. "That doesn't happen very often. Canaan had such a unique voice and fresh approach to songwriting, and I wanted to be part of it."

As a result, Brett, Jim and Canaan began building a writing relationship. One song in particular that came from that time span would go on to become Canaan's breakout hit single, "Love You Like That."

"The day we wrote that one, it didn't feel all that different from what we had been writing up to that point," notes Jim, who says they started with the song's chorus by painting the imagery of how deep love can run. "Love songs, at least for me, are not that easy to pull off. You can get cheesy easy. It's a challenge to write a love song from a guy's perspective without wimping him out too much. I think

"LOVE YOU LIKE THAT"

CANAAN SMITH

WRITERS: Brett Beavers, Jim Beavers, Canaan Smith

LITERAL BRO COUNTRY

While they are on hiatus for the time being,

Brett and Jim Beavers started a "fake" college band with fellow brother songwriters Brett and Brad Warren (aka The Warren Brothers). They released their fake debut album, *Bro*, in 2010, filled with songs to pitch to labels and executives. Rumor has it they will soon be working on a follow-up album, *Here We Bro Again*.



Brett Beavers



Jim Beavers

we were able to keep it cool and true to who Canaan is."

Like any good country song, the writers focused on "whiskey" being included in the song's chorus. However, the original line of *strong as a sip of whiskey* just wasn't making

the cut once they were able to let the lyric soak in. "I loved it because of how it rhymed with 'Mississippi,' but as we kept singing it back, one of us mentioned that 'sip' is not really that strong," says Jim. "In fact, it's kind of wimpy. Thankfully 'fifth of whiskey' not only still rhymed, but it actually made sense as well."

They continued to dig deeper into the song throughout the day, but the proof of what a great song they wrote wasn't validated for Jim until he heard the demo with Canaan's vocal. "It just jumped out of the speakers," recalls Jim. "I kept hitting repeat. His singing really makes that song, in my opinion."

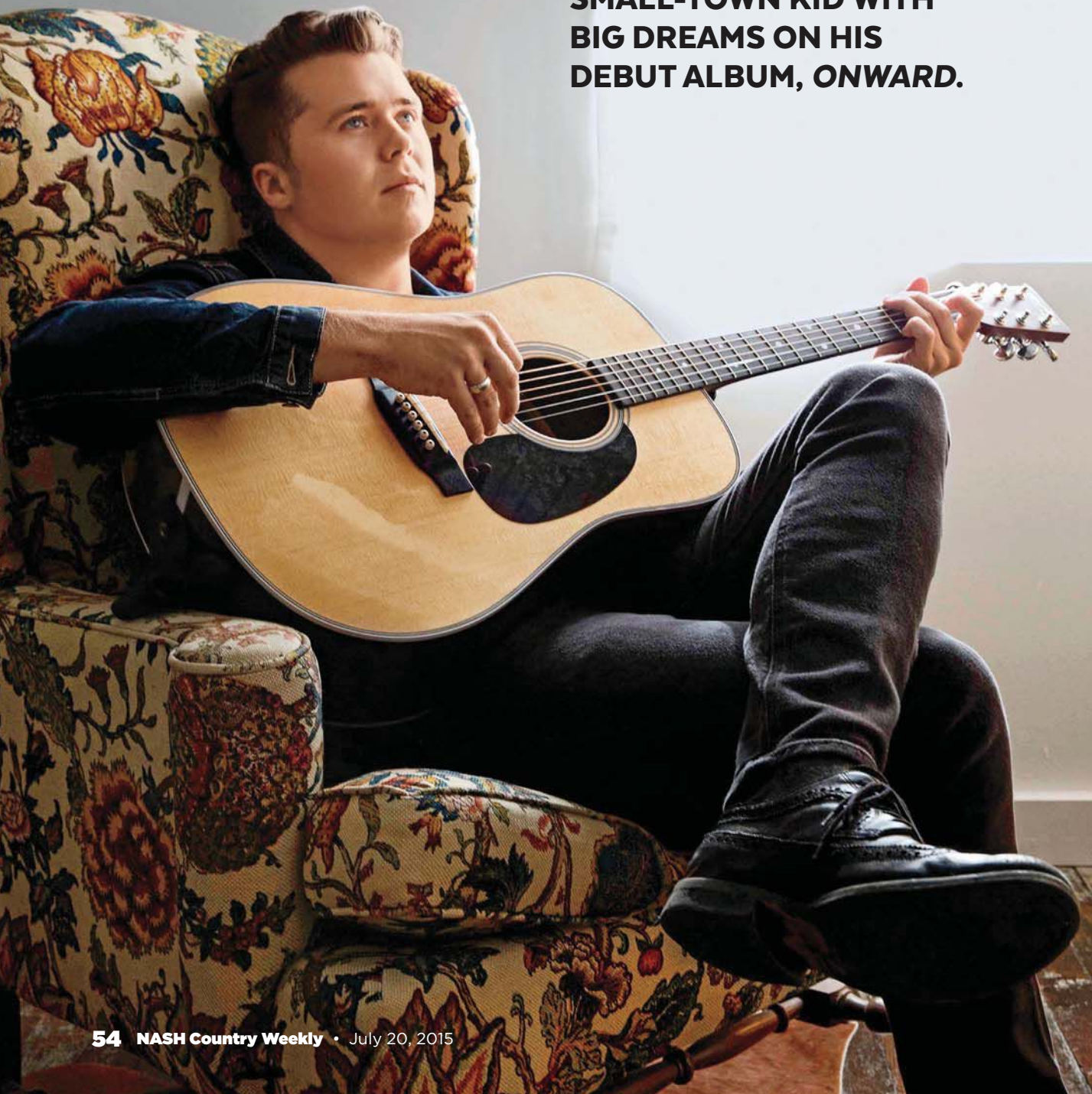
That same feeling rang true with Canaan's fans and country radio when it was released as the lead single from his debut album, *Bronco*. Recently, "Love You Like That" was certified gold for sales exceeding 500,000 units.

"When an artist like Canaan has been consistently writing for several years for his first album, you never know if/how/when/where your song may end up being a part of the bigger picture," says Jim. "You just write the best song you can and let it find its way. So, when 'Love You Like That' was chosen as the first single, I was a little surprised because I knew how many great songs he had to choose from. I am so proud 'Love You Like That' is doing so well for Canaan. He is the real deal, and I'm so thankful that I got to be any part of his success."

ALANNA CONAWAY

True Calling

**CHRISTIAN LOPEZ IS A
SMALL-TOWN KID WITH
BIG DREAMS ON HIS
DEBUT ALBUM, ONWARD.**



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ celebrated the May release of his namesake band's debut album, *Onward*, in a cozy listening room in Nashville, surrounded by friends, family and quite a few music industry folks. He recorded the project in Nashville, too, but alas, he was only passing through. At 19, he's decided to stick close to his hometown of Martinsburg, W.Va.

"We have a lot of beautiful sites, good music, no traffic—which I love. And just good people," says Christian, chatting in a Nashville conference room the morning after the show. "I think I will always live in West Virginia. I think that will always be home base for me. But of course we'll travel as much as we can, but that will always be where I come back."

Christian launched his performing career at open mic nights around home, singing in places like Blue Moon Cafe in nearby Shepherdstown. Although he grew up a fan of classic rock—AC/DC in particular—he switched to an acoustic guitar after hearing The Avett Brothers' *Live, Volume 3*.

Up until that point, he considered himself "just a riff guy on guitar" who jotted down lyrics with the intention of finding a singer someday. However, things didn't turn out that way.

"I couldn't ever find anybody to sing with me, so it was around that time when I started hitting up those open mics by myself," he says. "Me and my guitar."

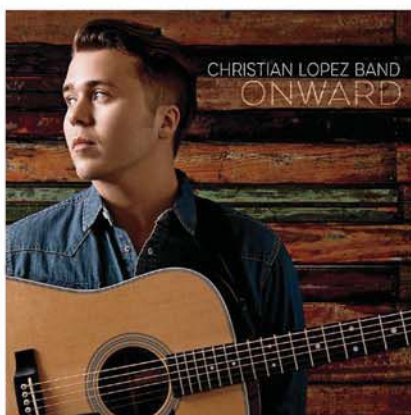
When Christian decided to pursue a career in music, he didn't have to persuade his parents that it was the right move.

"I mean, they started me in music and they got me my first instruments and put the music in my head," he says. "It wasn't really an official 'This is what I'm going to do, Mom and Dad.' They just saw where I was going and they jumped on board."

Stylistically, *Onward* leans toward a folk sound while dipping into '70s pop and bluegrass influences.



Christian Lopez Band (from left): Chelsea McBee, Christian, Michael Silver and Joshua LeBreton



Although an EP from 2014 was more assertive, *Onward* is subdued. Acoustic instruments, insightful lyrics and engaging melodies are all given a chance to shine through.

"I've always been a fan of keeping it simple—let the words do the talking, let the music do the talking," he says. "I think country music represents simplicity and honesty, and I've always wanted my music to represent that as well."

For *Onward*, Christian worked with red-hot producer Dave Cobb, regarded for his work with critically acclaimed singer/songwriters like Jason Isbell, Jamey Johnson, Sturgill Simpson and Chris Stapleton.

"He has such a great taste for arrangement. He's so smart when it comes to what needs to be there and what doesn't need to be there," Christian says. "So it was a learning process working with Dave, but also

it was so raw and it felt the way music should be made. We recorded live and we keep it pretty straightforward. You know, what happened in the rooms is what is on the record."

Meanwhile, *Onward* takes its name from a saying that Christian and his band have adopted as their motto.

"When we'd meet goals, or when we'd do things we'd always wanted to do, we'd say, 'Onward, to the next.' So I think it symbolizes where we are in our lives and our careers," he says. "This record being the first record, we have a lot of things we want to do in the future. We want to be on the road making music full-time, and I think that one word summed it all up."

But when he comes off the road, he's got some major sorting to do. After moving into a new house, he's figuring out where to stash five wooden crates brimming with vintage vinyl albums.

"My dad gave me his entire record collection. My aunt then gave me her entire record collection. And then I've collected myself. I probably have a couple thousand sitting at my house," he says. "I've gone through many record players. I've always been a huge fan. There's something about putting a needle down on a piece of vinyl that makes it so real. I want to make some vinyl records in the future. That's definitely a goal of mine."

CRAIG SHELBURNE

TOP 20 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
2	1	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
3	4	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
4	5	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
5	8	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
6	7	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
7	6	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
8	—	35 BIGGEST HITS TIM MCGRAW
9	10	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
10	11	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
11	3	SOUTHERNALITY A THOUSAND HORSES
12	—	BRINGIN' IT HOME (EP) BIG SMO
13	12	SPRING BREAK . . . CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
14	9	SUMMER FOREVER BILLY CURRINGTON
15	14	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
16	—	35 BIGGEST HITS HANK WILLIAMS JR.
17	19	SOUTHERN STYLE DARIUS RUCKER
18	17	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
19	15	OUTLAW IN ME THE LACS
20	22	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY

Kelsea's is the first No. 1 debut single for a solo gal since Carrie Underwood's "Jesus, Take the Wheel" in 2006.



TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS ON RDIO*

1	HIGH TIME KACEY MUSGRAVES
2	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
3	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
4	SANGRIA BLAKE SHELTON
5	I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE TAYLOR SWIFT

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY ALBUMS ON RDIO*

1	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
2	BRONCO CANAAN SMITH
3	SAME TRAILER DIFFERENT PARK KACEY MUSGRAVES
4	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
5	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT

*DATA FROM JUNE 29

TOP 20 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT KELSEA BALLERINI
2	3	SANGRIA BLAKE SHELTON
3	4	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD
4	5	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
5	7	DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS TIM MCGRAW WITH CATHERINE DUNN
6	8	TONIGHT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU JASON ALDEAN
7	9	LOVE YOU LIKE THAT CANAAN SMITH
8	1	WILD CHILD KENNY CHESNEY WITH GRACE POTTER
9	10	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
10	12	ONE HELL OF AN AMEN BRANTLEY GILBERT
11	11	CRUSHIN' IT BRAD PAISLEY
12	13	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
13	15	KICK THE DUST UP LUKE BRYAN
14	14	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
15	16	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND
16	17	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH
17	18	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH
18	21	HOUSE PARTY SAM HUNT
19	19	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT
20	22	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON

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TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

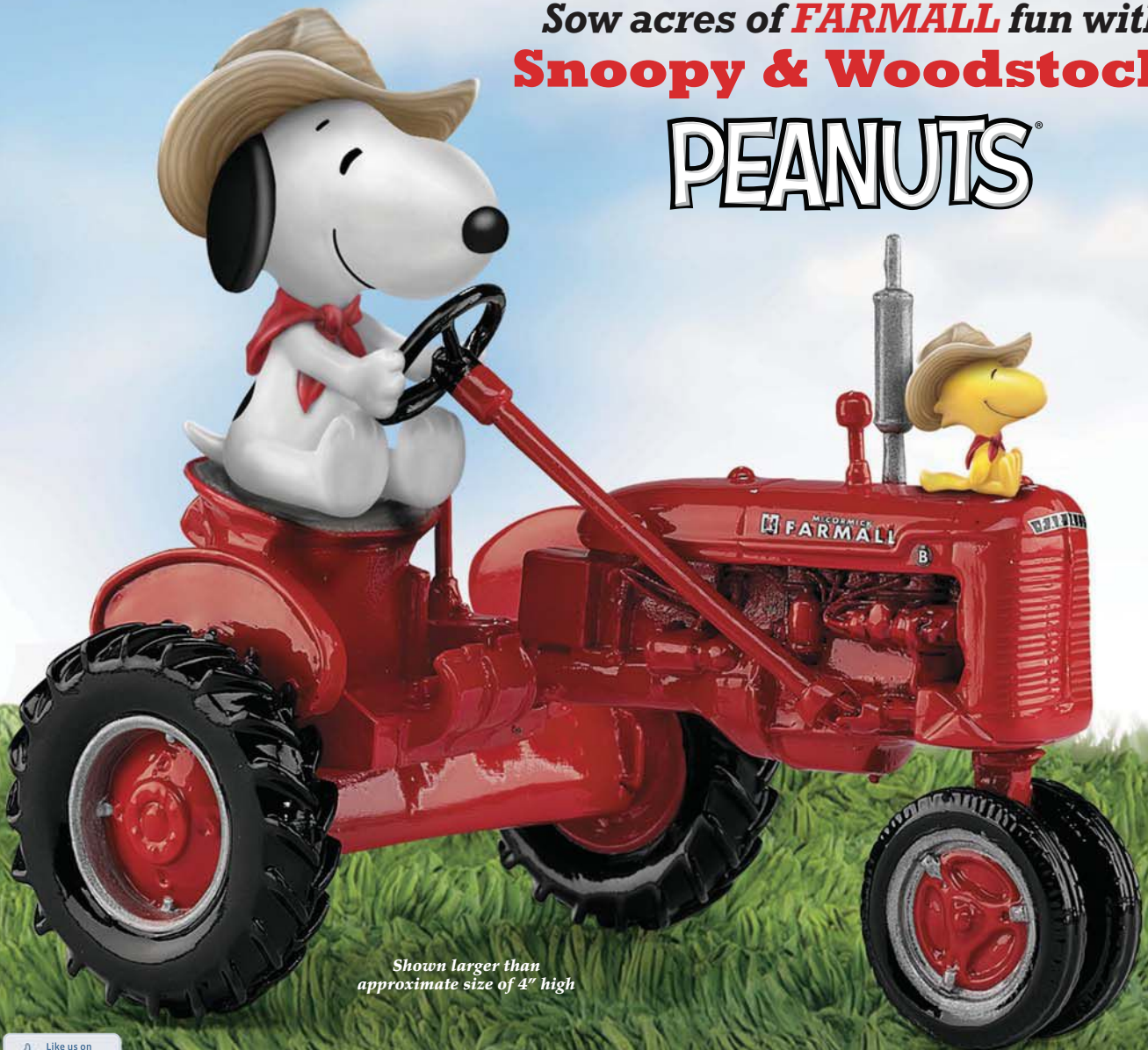
TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST	TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	8	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL	6	6	THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE RAY WYLIE HUBBARD
2	1	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL	7	5	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
3	3	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD	8	18	STILL RICHARD THOMPSON
4	2	SOUND & COLOR ALABAMA SHAKES	9	7	SUNDOWN OVER GHOST TOWN EILEEN JEWELL
5	4	SECOND HAND HEART DWIGHT YOAKAM	10	9	THE TRAVELER RHETT MILLER



British folk-rock legend and guitar virtuoso Richard Thompson delivers *Still*, produced by Jeff Tweedy.

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What are your feelings about the current bro-country trend in country music?



I miss the old-school country. I appreciate it, but I love old-school country music, and incorporating it all together sometimes throws me off a little bit. But if I had to pick for or against, I'm against.

MELINDA HURST

I'm a bro, so I'm for it. I love Sam Hunt and Chase Rice and all those people because we are recent college graduates so we can relate to them. And they sing about having a good time and we like to have a good time.

SEAN BENALLO



Same way, I like the change-up in country. I like, like he said, the Sam Hunts and Chase Rices because they bring a different flavor to country music that has been missing for a long time. It's nice to listen to the change so you don't have to listen to the same twangy stuff over and over again.

RYAN BENALLO



I like classic country and I prefer all of classic country.

ANNETTE PRIEST



I listen to all types of music, so I guess a little mixture won't hurt—maybe not too much of one type of music. I'd rather keep it country, though.

DENNIS CLARK

Against it. I think they need to get a separate chart for the hip-hop and '70s rock 'n' roll that they are doing. There's country and then there's the dance-along hip-hop hey ho. How many times are they going to say "Hey ho" on a record? I think they need to branch it out to more than 20 musicians, five producers and 10 engineers making the records in Nashville.

BIL VORNDICK



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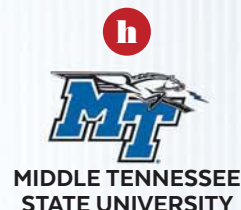
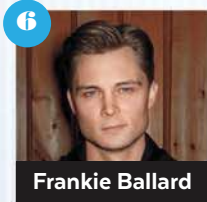
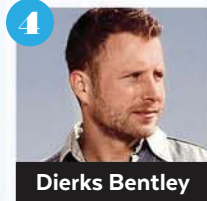
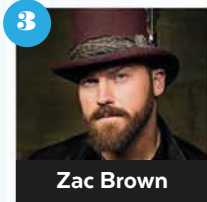
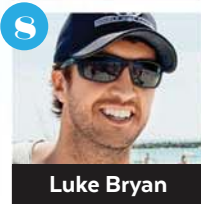
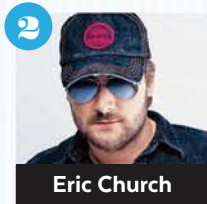
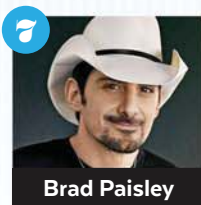
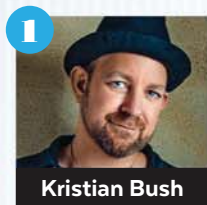
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MATCH-UP

Most of the male country performers who have risen to prominence in the last 25 years are good ol' country boys. But quite a few were at one time good ol' college boys, too. Listed below are 12 country singers who are college graduates. See if you can match them with their alma maters.



ANSWERS: 1-d, 2-e, 3-a, 4-f, 5-h, 6-c, 7-i, 8-j, 9-k, 10-b, 11-g, 12-f

Kristian by David McClister/Songs of the Architect; Brad by Jeff Lipsky/Bleiser PR; Eric by John Peetz/EB Media; Luke courtesy UHG; Zac by Danny Clinch/Shore Fire Media; Jake by David McClister/Sweet Talk Publicity; Dierks by Nino Munoz/The Greenroom PR; Sam by Chase Lauer/UHG; Chris by Sheryl Nields/Song Music; Nashville; Darius by Jim Wright/EB Media; Frankie by Sam Gabbay/Sweet Talk Publicity; Garth by Hank Tucker/Sony Music Nashville

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*We get by with
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Alanna Conaway

Alanna first got into the music business at age 11 by snapping pics. She eventually transitioned into the world of writing and began penning stories for *Country Weekly* in 2002.



Curtis Hilbun

Curtis, a Louisiana native, has been a contributor to *Country Weekly* since 1994, capturing the images of countless country artists and events. In his spare time, Curtis enjoys working in his yard and traveling to many of his favorite places.



Bob Doerschuk

Veteran music journalist Bob Doerschuk has served as editor of *CMA Close Up* and *Musician* magazines. His articles have appeared in *Country Weekly*, *Rolling Stone Country*, *No Depression*, *Relix*, *American Songwriter* and many other publications. He is a two-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Excellence in Music Journalism.

A Touch of Heaven

Copper Healing Bracelet



*Etched Cross Set with
a Genuine Diamond*

*Hand-crafted Design of Solid Copper
Plated in 18K Rose Gold*

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Next to the cross is the engraved message, "With God All Things Are Possible." The 18K rose-gold plated copper chain is adjustable from 7-8" to fit most wrists and includes a delicate heart charm, which hangs from the clasp.

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This bracelet is an exceptional value at \$79*, payable in 4 easy installments of \$19.75 and backed by our 120-day guarantee. It arrives in a velvet jewelry pouch with a Certificate of Authenticity. To reserve, send no money now; just mail the Reservation Application. Don't miss out—order today!

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*Plus \$9.98 shipping and service. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your jewelry after we receive your initial deposit. Sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.



Actual Size



"Someone sent me a picture of it [Nash Country Weekly], and I was like, 'Woah! I'm definitely on that cover.' That was wild. The past few years of just going to the grocery store, I'd always see the Country Weekly sitting there, and I'd always pick it up out of my interest for Nashville and moving up here. I'm very familiar with it, so to be in Nashville and to be on the cover of it, it's just nuts."

SAM HUNT

Eleven solo female artists whose debut country single reached No. 1 on Billboard's Country Airplay chart:



2015 KELSEA BALLERINI
"Love Me Like You Mean It"



2006 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
"Jesus, Take the Wheel"



2004 GRETCHEN WILSON
"Redneck Woman"



2001 JAMIE O'NEAL
"There Is No Arizona"



2001 CYNDI THOMSON
"What I Really Meant to Say"



1996 DEANA CARTER
"Strawberry Wine"



1993 FAITH HILL
"Wild One"



1992 WYNONNA
"She Is His Only Need"



1990 TRISHA YEARWOOD
"She's in Love With the Boy"



1973 MARIE OSMOND
"Paper Roses"



1964 CONNIE SMITH
"Once a Day"

TEMP GAUGE

WHAT'S HOT

July 31 should be a sizzling night in Nashville. In addition to **DOLLY PARTON** entertaining a sold-out crowd at the Ryman Auditorium, Shania Twain will take the stage at Bridgestone Arena as part of her first tour in 11 years.



WHAT'S NOT

LITTLE BIG TOWN canceled/rescheduled all of their tour dates through July 30 so that the quartet's Jimi Westbrook can recover from vocal cord surgery.

"The one big advantage that these great steakhouses have on us is the quality of beef that they use. Let's just say that you cannot buy what they get at your local market."

KIX BROOKS, HOSTING STEAKOUT WITH KIX BROOKS ON COOKING CHANNEL





Darius Rucker



Hunter Hayes



Brantley Gilbert

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